

Universities devise new entry system

JUDITH JUDD
Education Editor

Students would be able to apply to university immediately after they receive their A-level results under proposals for a new two-stage system being drawn up by universities.

At present, those wanting to start university in the year they take A-levels have to apply during the previous December for entry in September, a few weeks after A-level results are published.

But Tony Higgins, chief executive of the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) yesterday said a new procedure could be in place for those starting A-level courses the year after next and aiming at university entry in 1999.

University vice-chancellors will next month decide on proposals for a two-phase entry.

Mr Higgins told a seminar for careers teachers at Wolfson College, Oxford, that the first phase of students could apply during the first half of the

spring term, after they had sat their rock A-levels.

One of the reasons why the system needed reform, he said, was that 65 per cent of A-level grade predictions made by teachers were proved wrong.

Under the proposals, students who applied in the first phase would have four choices of university or college instead of the present six and would only be allowed to hold one conditional offer instead of two.

"Only 6 per cent of entrants come from their second choice.

It is just a waste of space," he said.

The second phase would start in May and continue until the end of September, so that students could wait until after they received their A-level results in August. They would then be allowed three choices, which would be sent in order to the three universities.

The present "clearing" system, in which students have to find out where places are available and join the scramble to secure them in late August and

September would therefore disappear.

If the vice-chancellors agree to the proposals, Mr Higgins and his officials will work out the detail and consult interested parties.

Schools are keen to change the system to reduce the uncertainty for applicants who have to gamble on getting the right grades. Universities have so far been cautious. They worry that there may not be enough time to process all the applications after A-level or to interview candidates in those subjects where interviews are essential.

The new proposals are a compromise between the two points of view, Mr Higgins said that, initially, most students would probably apply during the first phase but he hoped that growing numbers would realise that applying after A-level made sense.

He told the seminar, organised by Cambridge Occupational Analysts: "The present system can lead to real unfairness. Admissions tutors start in-

terviewing in the autumn term. Some fill up on the "first come first served" basis; though, if we hear of it, we come down on them like a ton of bricks. Others reject some early candidates because they know some equally good ones will come along later."

A Government-commissioned report to be published next week will show that higher education applicants with advanced vocational qualifications (GNVQs) are generally well prepared for their courses.

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Ford walk-out as pay offer is turned down

BARRIE CLEMENT
Labour Editor

More than 1,000 Ford workers yesterday staged unofficial stoppages in protest at an inflation-breaching "final" pay offer worth a minimum of 9.25 per cent over two years.

The walk-outs came as the Government announced that the inflation rate had dropped from 3.9 per cent to 3.2 per cent, as compared with a proposed increase at Ford this year of 4.75 per cent.

Union leaders, who will be expected to repudiate the wildcat action or face stiff legal penalties, professed surprise at the militancy of their members at the Dagenham assembly plant and the normally moderate employees at Southampton.

Senior officials at the Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union predicted that while the two plants would revert to normal working today, other divisions of Ford UK, including the parts delivery service based at Dagenham, might decide to emulate yesterday's "spontaneous action".

Union leaders at the Bridgend and Halewood complexes were minded to accept the company's proposals during 12 hours of negotiations on Wednesday, but they were outvoted two to one by representatives from other Ford works.

Plant representatives are to meet next Wednesday to consider the results of a consultation process and are expected to call for fresh negotiations with management. Some union insiders believe the company will not improve its offer unless there is a substantial majority for industrial action in a ballot.

The proposals would give the 22,000 hourly-paid Ford workers a 4.5 per cent rise next year, or the inflation rate, plus 0.5 per cent, whichever is high-

er. Management also proposed improvements in pension entitlements, but refused to countenance a reduction in working hours from 39 to 37 hours.

Tony Woodley, chairman of the union negotiating team, said yesterday's stoppages were genuinely spontaneous.

Indeed, union officials declared their surprise at the degree of anger shown by some of their members, but said production workers nationally had been responsible for a 100 per cent improvement in productivity in 10 years.

In the Dagenham plant, there has been an 84 per cent improvement in four years, according to a union official. "This is not a theoretical calculation. The lines have speeded up and the lads are sweating their bollocks off," he said.

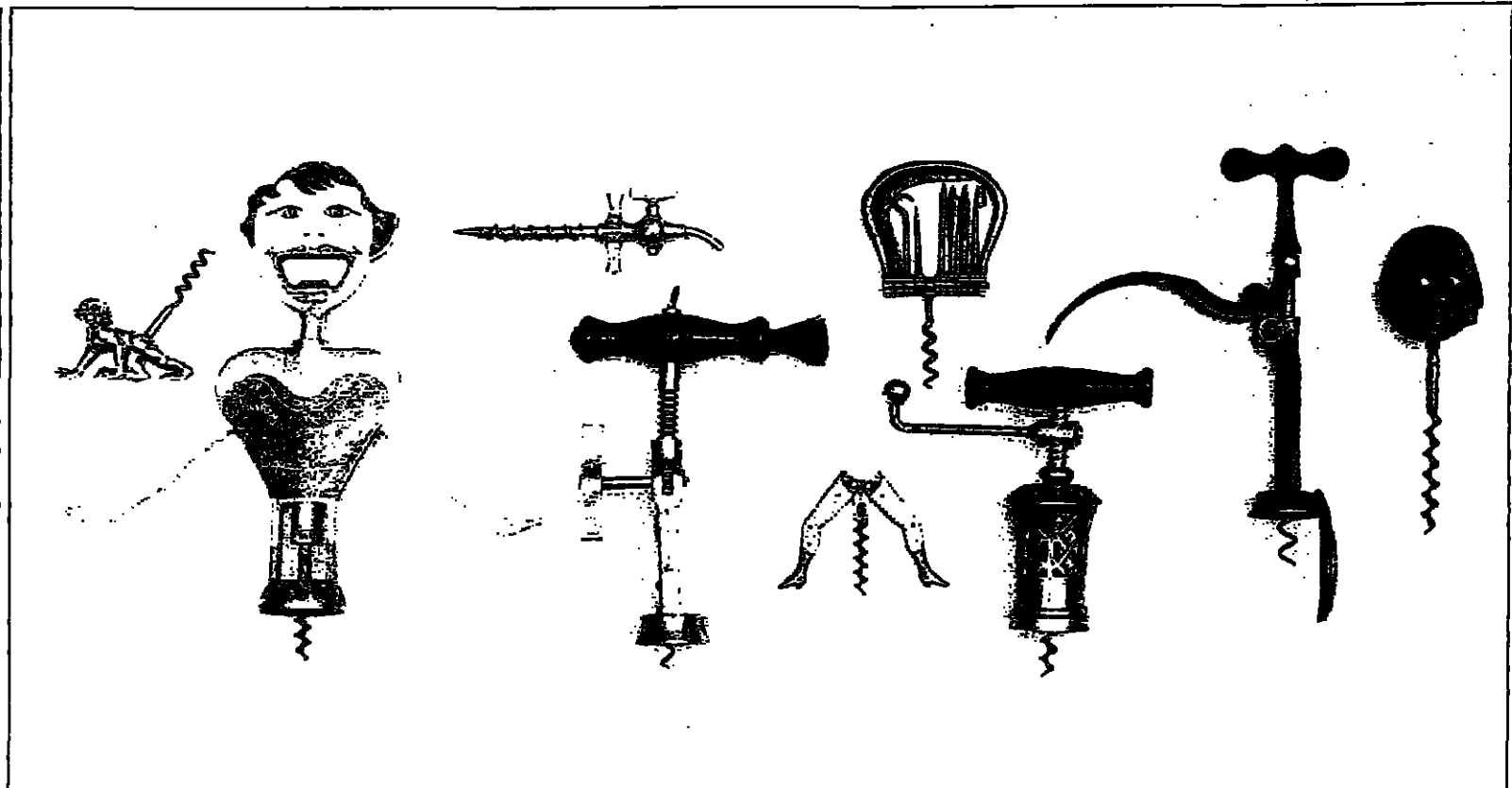
Ford's proposals will nevertheless fuel expectations elsewhere and will make it more difficult for ministers to keep the lid on inflation. Under the proposals, most production workers would get an increase of £27 a week in the first year.

A spokesman for Ford said he was disappointed that unofficial action was taking place, at a time when the offer was still being considered. "We hope that normal production will be resumed as soon as possible".

The spokesman estimated that the company had lost 800 Fiestas because of the strike at the Dagenham and about 60 Transit vans at Southampton.

"We are standing by what we said in the negotiations, the offer is final. We are not prepared to move on a shorter working week and we have proposed generous improvements in pay and pensions."

Union leaders are expected to announce on Monday a majority for strike action at Vauxhall, in protest at a 7 per cent two-year offer.



A lot of bottle: Part of a collection of antique corkscrews to be auctioned at Christie's in London on 22 November

Photograph: John Voos

Siamese twin boy dies during separation

One of the Siamese twin boys born in London five days ago has died during an eight-hour operation to separate them and the other is fighting for his life. It was disclosed yesterday, writes Glenda Cooper.

No Siamese twin born with a fused heart has ever survived, but surgeons said yesterday there was a good chance of the surviving twin, who is now in intensive care, making a recovery.

The "incredibly complicated" surgery took place at Great Ormond Street Hospital in central London. The twins, from Kuwait and born five weeks premature, had been joined from the breastbone to the navel and had fused hearts and livers.

The consultant paediatric surgeon Mr Edward Kieley, who led the operating team, said: "I

think we're quite pleased to have one baby alive... We knew there was always going to be the potential that the second one would die. We were quite concerned that both would die, as has happened with conjoined hearts before."

A paediatric surgery professor, Lewis Spitz, and a consultant cardiac surgeon, Marc de Leval, also took part in the 12-hour operation.

The twins had been delivered by Caesarean section at Queen Charlotte's Hospital, west London, last week before being transferred.

It was the first time the team, the most expert in the field in Europe, had attempted to separate conjoined twins with fused hearts. Before the operation the surgeons gave the parents a 10

per cent chance of one of the twins surviving.

The major problem facing them was that only one heart was functioning properly. Mr de Leval said: "We realised that the good heart was supporting the bad heart. When we disconnected the two, the bad heart could not support the circulation of the twin who died."

He said that after the surgeons thought they had separated the hearts, they realised there was a second, hidden connection between them. It took 10 minutes to find the join.

The surgeons said the next few days would be critical. But Professor Spitz said: "The child has got a normal heart, which is a big advantage. We would be very disappointed if he did not survive."

Queen Mother's hip replacement was 'a success'

GLENDA COOPER

The Queen Mother underwent a hip replacement operation yesterday but is making "a good recovery", Buckingham Palace said last night.

The one-and-a-half-hour operation on her right hip, at King Edward VII's Hospital for Officers in London, was "completed successfully". The operation on the Queen Mother, 95, was planned, on the advice of her doctors, and was not emergency surgery. She is expected to remain in hospital for about two weeks.

The Arthritis and Rheumatism Council said the Queen Mother was one of the oldest people in the world to undergo hip replacement but the prospects for a new pain-free life after her operation were "extremely good". A spokesman said: "The man-made replacement, of plastic and metal, removes all pain and usually results in improved mobility. There is a 95 per cent success rate for such operations."

The Queen Mother's pain and discomfort has been noticeable recently and she has relied on a walking stick or wheelchair for some time. Most recently she has been driven around on public engagements in a golf buggy.

At her last public appearance - the Field of Remembrance Service at Westminster Abbey a week ago - the Queen Mother walked with difficulty using two



In pain: The Queen Mother has had difficulty walking

sticks, and she was not present at the Cenotaph on Sunday for the Remembrance Day Service.

Although hip replacement is a standard procedure carried out routinely on 50,000 patients each year, the effect of surgery on a 95-year-old is bound to cause concern.

In almost every case the patient is elderly and usually suffering from painful arthritis. Most patients stay two or three weeks in hospital, but it can take three months before they can walk unaided and six months to a year before they make a full recovery.

The Queen Mother's operation is likely to fuel the debate over claims of rationing within the health service. While privately funded operations, like hers, are successfully carried out on the very old, they are seldom performed on NHS patients over the age of 75.

IN BRIEF

School truancy leading to crime

More than 7 out of 10 children bunk off school and a quarter play truant at least one day a week, a Home Office-funded survey has found.

The study of 1,106 pupils found that a significant number of truants were involved in crime or were drawn into illicit activities such as under-age sex and drug-taking.

However, the report, *Truancy - The Partnership Approach*, said that when initiatives by the police, schools, local authorities, and retailers, were carried out crime fell, school attendance improved and town centres became safer.

IRA kidnap fear

Police in Northern Ireland were last night searching for a man believed to have been snatched by an IRA punishment squad. John Hegarty, 19, had earlier been questioned by police about the theft of £16,000 worth of Christmas savings from a church community centre in Strabane, Co Tyrone.

Sea birds killed

Marine pollution experts are investigating an oil slick which has killed sea birds in Dyfed, west Wales. The oil is affecting about eight miles of coast between Cefn Sidan beach and the Penrhyn country park. The bodies of about 45 cormorants and guillemots have been found.

Pilots disciplined

Two Britannia Airways pilots who flew an empty Boeing 767 away from the normal flight path in order to pass over the home of the first officer to greet his wife have been disciplined by the airline. Capt Hugh Carmichael has resigned from the airline and former first officer Michael Stanley has lost seniority and faced "severe disciplinary sanctions" over the incident which occurred at Congleton, Cheshire, on 30 October.

Murder inquiry

Police in Warwickshire were last night questioning four people in connection with the murder of 15-year-old Naomi Smith in Anslow Common, near Nuneaton. Naomi was stabbed and sexually assaulted at a recreation ground near her home on 14 September.

Cleaner beaches

Britain's bathing beaches were their cleanest ever this year, with 89 per cent meeting the European Union's legal standard for sewage pollution, compared to 82 per cent last year. By law they should all comply next year - but it is highly unlikely that they will.

Bouncing with health

Young women should jump on the spot 50 times a day to prevent the onset of brittle bone disease in later life, according to a report by Dr Joan Bassey, of the Queen's Medical Centre, Nottingham, published in the *Annals of Rheumatic Diseases*.

THE INDEPENDENT ABROAD

Austria	£540	France	£550
Belgium	£570	Italy	£550
Canada	£530	Malta	£550
Czech Rep.	£530	Norway	£550
Denmark	£530	Poland	£550
Finland	£530	Spain	£550
Germany	£530	Sweden	£550
Greece	£530	Switzerland	£550
Ireland	£530	USA	£550

OVERSEAS SUBSCRIPTIONS
For rates, 13 weeks Europe £150.75, Zone 1 160p, Zone 2 170p, Zone 3 180p, Zone 4 190p, Zone 5 200p, Zone 6 210p, Zone 7 220p, Zone 8 230p, Zone 9 240p, Zone 10 250p, Zone 11 260p, Zone 12 270p, Zone 13 280p, Zone 14 290p, Zone 15 300p, Zone 16 310p, Zone 17 320p, Zone 18 330p, Zone 19 340p, Zone 20 350p, Zone 21 360p, Zone 22 370p, Zone 23 380p, Zone 24 390p, Zone 25 400p, Zone 26 410p, Zone 27 420p, Zone 28 430p, Zone 29 440p, Zone 30 450p, Zone 31 460p, Zone 32 470p, Zone 33 480p, Zone 34 490p, Zone 35 500p, Zone 36 510p, Zone 37 520p, Zone 38 530p, Zone 39 540p, Zone 40 550p, Zone 41 560p, Zone 42 570p, Zone 43 580p, Zone 44 590p, Zone 45 600p, Zone 46 610p, Zone 47 620p, Zone 48 630p, Zone 49 640p, Zone 50 650p, Zone 51 660p, Zone 52 670p, Zone 53 680p, Zone 54 690p, Zone 55 700p, Zone 56 710p, Zone 57 720p, Zone 58 730p, Zone 59 740p, Zone 60 750p, Zone 61 760p, Zone 62 770p, Zone 63 780p, Zone 64 790p, Zone 65 800p, Zone 66 810p, Zone 67 820p, Zone 68 830p, Zone 69 840p, Zone 70 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Ecstasy tragedy: Father of dead girl makes plea for action on dealers as another teenager fights for his life

Boys in hospital after drugs cocktail

A 15-year-old boy was last night fighting for his life and another was recovering in hospital after they took a drugs cocktail including ecstasy.

Eddie Ingleby and Kenneth Williams were taken ill just hours before tragic Leah Betts lost her fight for life.

The schoolboys were taken to the Queen Alexandra Hospital in Cosham, Hants, after hallucinating at their homes on Wednesday night.

Kenneth was fighting for his life in the hospital's intensive care unit while Eddie was said to be "recovering". Both boys are from the Leigh Park area of Havant, Hants.

Kenneth's mother, Sandra Page, described how her son returned staggering and stumbling to their home in Winterslow Drive. She said he could not speak when he arrived home and added: "I'd like to string up whoever is responsible for this."

Kenneth's step-brother, Carl Page, said Kenneth kept falling over and bumping into things.

He said: "He went into the kitchen and tried buttering a plate. We thought he was just drunk. We put him to bed but he kept getting out and wanted to sleep on the floor. He got really aggressive when we went towards him."

The family called an ambulance at about 11pm and he was taken to hospital.

Eddie was taken to the hospital about an hour later, after his mother found him staggering uncontrollably around their home at Fleet End Close, Leigh Park.

Detectives in Portsmouth, Hants, warned yesterday that the drugs problem was so bad in the city that there could be "ten Leah Betts tragedies every week".

Drug squad Detective Sergeant Nigel Midgley said Portsmouth's club scene attracted thousands of people from around the region each weekend and drugs were widely available.

"We have spoken to both the boys, but not surprisingly they do not want to tell us what they took. We believe that they took a cocktail of drugs, it's frighteningly easy to get hold of ecstasy, amphetamines and cannabis."

"We're now making inquiries to find out where they got the drugs from."

Portsmouth police estimate that the ecstasy trade in the city is worth a staggering £13m a year.



Facing tragedy: Leah Betts' father, Paul, and his wife, Janet, show their emotion yesterday after deciding to cut off the 18-year-old's life-support Photograph: Edward Webb

'My Leah's ordeal is now over'

LOUISE JURY

The life-support system keeping alive the 18-year-old ecstasy victim, Leah Betts, was switched off yesterday after tests showed she was brain dead.

Her distraught father, Paul, broke the news at a press conference at which he renewed appeals for action against drug dealers and said he took comfort from Leah's organs being used for transplant.

Leah, of Latchingdon near Maldon, Essex, had been in a coma at Broomfield Hospital, Chelmsford, since collapsing just after midnight on Sunday after taking one ecstasy tablet at her 18th birthday party.

After four days in which the teenager showed no signs of improvement, the decision to switch off the life-support was made on Wednesday evening and carried out early yesterday. Just a few hours later, Mr Betts

and his wife, Janet, faced the press and wept as he said: "Leah's ordeal is now over."

In an emotional outpouring, Mr Betts, a former officer in the Metropolitan police, called for a radical review of the sentencing of drug dealers and spoke of his hatred for those he accused of killing his daughter.

"The hatred I have got is welling up inside me not only as a father but as an ex-policeman. I think there has to be a complete radical change in the way people are dealt with," he said.

Drug dealers should serve the sentence passed "instead of being sentenced to five years and then you let them out after five months".

"That is the biggest load of bull I have come across. What deterrent is that? It killed my daughter and it is killing others."

Mr Betts said he would treasure memories of his daughter "from bouncing her on my knee to when she came running down



Victim: Leah Betts died five days after taking ecstasy

the hall on Saturday night dressed in her new outfit, saying 'how do I look?'. She looked so beautiful."

His wife, Leah's stepmother, who is a nurse, repeated a

warning to those who take drugs: "I could lecture like a mum until I am blue in the face, but the only people who can prevent this from happening again is yourself."

She said she was horrified by people "sitting around discussing the virtues of these drugs" and by the notion of testing tablets to check the purity. She stressed that the ecstasy which claimed Leah's life was the straight, unadulterated chemical compound.

Mrs Betts added: "To people who say it's her own fault, you are right, but drugs should not be available in the first place and peer pressure should be to refuse them and not take them. This fashion must die like our daughter has died."

Mr and Mrs Betts, together with Leah's three sisters and a brother, had kept a vigil at her bedside. They thanked the intensive care unit staff, the transplant teams and the public who have inundated the family with letters and cards of support.

Some of the letters came from children who had stopped taking drugs after seeing what had happened.

Mr Betts said: "If there are any others I can help - by talking to groups, families, anything whatever having lived this living hell I would be only too willing to assist in any way I can."

Vanessa Morgan, transplant co-ordinator for Essex and North London, met Leah's parents on Wednesday after they told intensive care staff they wished their daughter's organs to be donated. She said: "A young death like this is such a tragedy that getting something positive out of it must be good."

Leah is thought to have bought the tablet at Raquel's nightclub in Basildon last Friday. Police yesterday repeated appeals for anyone with information on the dealer to come forward.

A number of people have been questioned and released on police bail. Two were charged with intent to supply drugs in incidents unrelated to her case.

Rave culture link brings greater risk in Britain

LOUISE JURY

Britain is seeing a higher number of deaths from ecstasy than other countries because of the way in which the drug has taken hold in the dance scene where the possibility of overheating and dehydration increases the risks.

Dr John Henry, of the National Poisons Unit at Guy's

Hospital, London, said: "We're ahead of other countries because it is now part of the national culture. Many people do it. But, as far as I know, the numbers of deaths are small elsewhere."

There have been very few in the United States. The incidence is lower because the drug is generally taken in more leisurely circumstances than the

hot and frenzied surroundings of a night-club.

However, Dr Henry is now receiving reports from Germany, Sweden and Italy. "I have heard from colleagues in Germany two or three times recently with cases of liver damage and people needing liver transplants."

The reports are coming from cities well-known for their night

life, like Hamburg and Berlin.

He believes that more may emerge when the risks become more widely known and ecstasy is identified as a possible factor in young people's deaths.

In Britain, Dr Henry believes as many as 50 young people a year are dying as a consequence of taking the drug. There are certainly more than the commonly quoted figure of

a total of 50. More accurate figures will eventually become available through the national mortality data but those statistics are currently running with a three-year time lag.

He does not understand why "this fad, this craze" of taking ecstasy has taken hold but he fears for its implications. "We are [effectively] conducting a massive experiment," he says.

The long-term effects are unknown.

His biggest worry is the possibility of higher suicide and depression rates among the young people who regard "dropping an E" as barely breaking the law.

Dr Henry says those who have used ecstasy have lower levels of a hormone called serotonin in their spinal fluid. So do depressives.

West jurors told to ignore pressure

WILL BENNETT

The jurors in the Rosemary West trial were told yesterday that they must keep "cool heads" when considering their verdicts.

The judge, Mr Justice Mantell, warned them in his summing up at Winchester Crown Court that they must ignore the external pressures which the sensational character of the case had created.

"Nobody can pretend otherwise than that you have a heavy responsibility. Your task is not made any easier by the sensational nature of the case and by the very heavy media interest surrounding it," he said.

"I must repeat the warning to set aside all perceived ideas about the case, all prejudice and all sentiment. Cool heads are needed."

The judge told them that they must ignore what they had read in newspapers, seen on television or heard on the radio about the case.

Mrs West, 41, denies murdering 10 girls and young women whose remains were found at 25 Cromwell Street, Gloucester, where she lived with her husband Frederick, and at their previous home in the city. Mr West, who was charged with 12 murders, was found hanged in his prison cell last New Year's Day.

The judge told the jury: "The prosecution must prove guilt. A defendant never had to prove his or her innocence ..."

"Guilt is not proved unless the prosecution makes you sure of it. In other words the prosecution has to satisfy you beyond reasonable doubt that that applies to each and every charge."

"Murder is the deliberate unlawful killing of another human being with the intention at that time to cause death or really serious bodily harm. It is not just the person who strikes the fatal blow who is guilty. Where two people act together as part of a joint plan to commit the offences each is guilty."

"Suppose you were sure that Rosemary West had enticed a young woman to Cromwell Street ... then even though it might be that Fred West was ultimately responsible for despatching the victim Rosemary West would be equally guilty."

The judge told the jury not to "speculate about what evidence there might have been. You have heard all the evidence."

The judge will continue his summing up today and the jury is expected to be sent out to consider its verdicts on Monday.

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End of the line for 'Today': The newspaper that broke the mould is the victim of falling sales and a harsh economic climate

Colourful days and the death of Eddy's dream

STEVE BOGGAN

As the world's first seven-day electronic newspaper was being put to bed on 3 March 1986, its editor, Brian MacArthur, gathered his exhausted staff together and thanked them.

"Tonight, we've reached the green fields despite the scroffs, the cynics and fair weather friends. It's a magnificent achievement by all of you," he said. It was indeed an achievement that *Today* came out at all that night. Computer failures dogged production; the new technology that was to have made the newspaper more up-to-the-minute than any other in history was not working; and, of course, the colour printing disaster that was to have become the hallmark of *Today* was only then being conceived.

Recalling the launch later, Mr MacArthur wrote: "As they left the party celebrating the launch,

most staff knew in their hearts that the paper was disappointing.... The greatest betrayal was the quality of the colour, the great promise of *Today*. We had a genuinely historic picture of the Queen. It had been transmitted in seconds down a telephone line... scanner machine, the first time that computer technology had been used to transmit new pictures from Australia, where the Queen was on tour, to Britain. As it appeared on the front page, however, the colour was smudged."

It was to have been a technological dream, but it turned into a nightmare for Mr MacArthur and Eddy Shah, the Warrington newspaper proprietor who broke the union stronghold over print production and launched the first new national newspaper in decades.

Production free from the interference of unions and press

barons and direct inputting by journalists was to have been the future. On the back of the dream came other newspapers. Some, like the *Independent*, survived. Others, like the *London Daily News* and the *Sunday Correspondent*, failed.

"There was a tremendous sense of optimism before the launch," Michael Williams, a former *Today* features editor, recalled. "It was to have been a truly independent, classless newspaper using the latest in technology to produce a clean, colour newspaper with a US-style style of presentation. But we weren't ready. Shah set a premature deadline... the staff couldn't cope with the technology. It was chaos and pandemonium came launch time."

On day one, Mr MacArthur said the paper sold more than 1 million copies and could have sold 3 million. But, with daily sales down to 550,000 within months, 400,000 lower than projected, *Today* ran into severe financial trouble and was sold in a £24m deal to Tiny Rowland's Lohno in June 1986.

In June 1987, with circulation at just 300,000, Rupert Murdoch bought the paper in a £40m deal and installed as editor David Montgomery, editor of the *News of the World*. He transformed the paper into a brash, sharp read for the aspiring executive. He was the first to identify the yuppie as a sexy tabloid subject, filling the paper with pound signs, power dressing, mobile phones and property prices. Paradoxically, he was also the first to notice the new wave of green consumerism. He married the two, doubled circulation within a year and earned a Newspaper of the Year title.

For a time, *Today* was seen as a threat to both the *Daily Mail* and the *Mirror*, but that threat subsided with yuppiedom and the fortunes of the Greens. With sales falling below half a million again, 45 journalists were made



First edition: Eddy Shah, *Today's* founder, with a copy on launch day Photograph: Reuters

redundant in January 1991. Mr Montgomery stood down several months later, making way for Martin Dunn, deputy editor of the *Sun* to tidy up a product left shoddy after its move to Wapping. Mr Dunn's peers believe he performed well, redesigning the paper and stemming the circulation drift, before moving handing over to

Richard Stott, who remained editor until yesterday.

Under the stewardship of Mr Stott — a former *Mirror* and *People* editor — the paper leaned harder to the left and *Today* began to nip at the heels of government and the Establishment.

But circulation wasn't holding steady. It was down to 560,000 from 615,000 last year,

and it was the paper's downfall. Despite its fresh lease of life as a campaigning paper, despite offices in Wapping and shared News International presses — the newspaper group was no longer prepared to absorb the losses.

Last night, as its journalists pondered their future, *Today* was put to bed for the last time.

End of price war gives industry hope

Analysis

A radical restructuring of Britain's newspaper market, launched yesterday with the closure of *Today*, will give the declining industry its first breathing space for three years.

While cost-cutting is likely to continue, the demise of one newspaper and the apparent end of the debilitating cover price war will together improve prospects throughout Fleet Street.

Sharp increases in newspaper prices — 40 per cent last year, with up to 15 per cent more expected in January — have badly squeezed profit margins across the industry. The price war, launched in mid-1993 by Rupert Murdoch's News International, exacerbated the pressures for all main United Kingdom titles, and forced most companies to pare back on expenses.

The closure of *Today* was an admission that the title would never make any money, according to News International insiders. Having chalked up £140m in losses, Mr Murdoch decided, finally, to walk away.

An offer this summer from Mohammed al-Fayed, owner of Harrods, to take *Today* off Mr Murdoch's hands was rejected in favour of closing the newspaper outright, in the hope that some of its 500,000 readers would move to other NI titles, such as the *Times*.

Insiders at NI said the closure would also allow additional copies of the *Sun* to be printed, and that the company was planning to concentrate on building up its other titles, including the *Times*, the *Sunday Times* and the *News of the World*.

At the same time, the price war was all but abandoned last night. Next Monday, the *Times* will be on sale for 30p, up 5p. Two months ago, the cover price was raised from 20p to 25p, allowing both the *Telegraph* and the *Independent* to follow suit, to 35p from 30p.

The *Telegraph*, which yesterday unveiled sharply lower profits for the year to date, said it was likely to raise its cover price as well, probably to 40p.

News International is also lowering the profit margin it provides to retailers, from 11.9 per cent to just 10 per cent. Taken together, the moves look aimed at improving the profitability of the *Times*.

"This means that even Murdoch isn't impervious to newsprint increases," Daniel Coulson, chief executive of the *Telegraph* group, said. "And it means the price war didn't work."

The *Times* has seen its circulation nearly double to 680,000 from about 350,000 as a result of its aggressive pricing strategy. But following an initial slump, the *Telegraph* managed to keep its sales above the psychologically important 1 million mark.

Moreover, the rise in circulation hurt profits at News International at the very time that Mr Murdoch's cash needs elsewhere in the world, particularly in Asia, were growing. Profits from his master company were hurt by development costs at Star-TV, the Asian satellite broadcasting company.

The UK newspaper industry anticipates much more action in coming months. In particular, speculation over the future of the ailing *Express* titles intensified yesterday. Media analysts expect Lord Stevens, chairman of United News and Media, either to sell the newspapers or to invest fresh funds to improve their chances of competing against the rival Mail titles. The end of the price war will make it easier for him to find funds for the needed investment.

While shares of all the publicly quoted newspaper companies rose yesterday, analysts warned that the long-term problems remained.

"This is a declining industry," one media analyst said. "It will become increasingly hard to make any money out of [newspapers]."

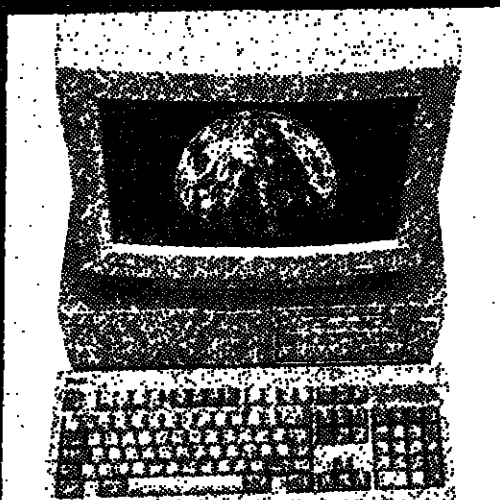
Mathew Horsman



Murdoch: Would not absorb losses

Photograph: David Rose

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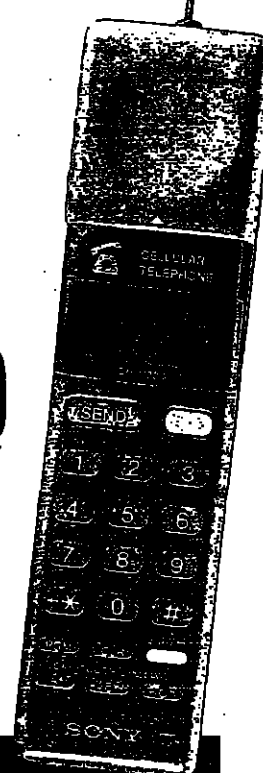
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news

Free and easy: While some national monuments now charge for entry, there is still a bustling alternative culture for the day-tripper



Star turn: Visitors watch a free performance by a street entertainer in Covent Garden, central London, yesterday

Photograph: John Voos

Something for nothing? All you need is a spot of lateral thinking

DAVID LISTER
Arts Correspondent

Like most of London's museums now, the Science Museum in South Kensington charges for admission. But for those eager to broaden the frontiers of their knowledge, they can boldly go where few men have gone before — to Willesden Green — and have an alternative science lecture for free.

Every week expert "alternative thinkers" give free talks. Last night's advocated the theory that diseases arrive on our planet on comets that have travelled from outer space.

While increasing parts of the capital's high culture move to charging customers, with the new head of the Victoria and Albert an advocate of admission charges, there remains a bustling alternative culture for the visitor or family on a day out. And it's free. So too are the national monuments to high culture: the British Museum, the National and Tate galleries. Up to 50 lesser museums and galleries in London are still free. But with the Science, Natu-

ral History, National Maritime and Imperial War museums all having compulsory charges, and the V&A asking euphemistically for voluntary donations, it can pay to think laterally. And some of London's free attractions certainly demand a certain amount of lateral thinking.

They still change the guard at Buckingham Palace. And you still do not need a penny to see it, though you need a pocket calculator to plan your visit. It is advertised as being "on alternate days, on even dates in November and December, not in very wet weather or on certain ceremonial days".

Free day in London

10am: British Museum.
11.30am: Watch the Changing of the Guard, St James's Park.
2pm: National Gallery.
4pm: Visit the 10 Bears Christmas Spirit at Cleopatra (Beware: the tickets cost £1).
8pm: Join in with Carols in Trafalgar Square.

Free too is the Albert Memorial Visitor Centre. The memorial itself, a masterpiece of Gothic revival with nearly 200 statues, is shrouded by scaffolding and hidden from view, but an exhibition in the adjacent visitors' centre shows what it would look like if it were visible.

The London Tourist Board points out that the capital's parks are free, many with free concerts, and so is the capital's pageantry, events like the State Opening of Parliament, the Lord Mayor's Show, Trafalgar Day Parade and Trooping the Colour, though it adds laterally "although sometimes you have to pay for the best view".

It is proud of what it calls free eccentricities entertainment, such as Speakers' Corner and the Peter Pan Cup Swimming Race. There is non-eccentric entertainment in places like the South Bank Centre foyer, Westminster Abbey and Covent Garden piazza. The Oxford and Cambridge boat race can be viewed for free, so can the London marathon and the Notting Hill Carnival.

V&A director attacks 'silly' donations

DAVID LISTER

The director of the Victoria and Albert Museum, Dr Alan Borg, yesterday described the museum's system of asking visitors for voluntary donations as "silly", claiming it just made people feel uncomfortable and did not raise revenue efficiently.

As revealed in the *Independent* yesterday, Dr Borg wants to end this system, and is an advocate of compulsory charges. At a meeting with journalists he spelt out the enormous sums the museum now needs, claiming that most of its 144 galleries were sub-standard.

Dr Borg took over as director of the V&A from Dame Elizabeth Esteve-Coll last month. He has already made changes to the management system she introduced. "I have removed one layer of management," he said. "One effect of that has been to bring the curators closer to the centre."

He added that millions needed to be spent on bringing the museum up to a proper standard. "We have got galleries which to my mind are a disgrace to a national museum," he said. "The British art and design galleries are poor. We haven't



Dr Alan Borg: made changes

got an education centre, which is amazing for a place that was set up with a remit of education. Some galleries are appallingly displayed, one has been closed for living memory. The Islamic gallery is appalling. The Henry Cole wing galleries are a disgrace. The majority of galleries need upgrading, from very serious upgrading to making sure everything has a label. The ceramics galleries are very poorly displayed with labels that go back to before the war."

On the question of charging, Dr Borg, who introduced admission charges at the Imperial War Museum, said he did not have a specific figure in mind, but added: "It is not a question of affordability." Referring to gallery closures, he said: "I would rather have an entrance charge which could keep the galleries open." He added that the museum, which receives a £30m grant from government, was moving towards a deficit.

In an article to be published in *Antique Collector*, Dr Borg says that the majority of people who visit the V&A "could afford to pay a £10 entrance fee if they had to". At present visitors are asked to give a £4.50 donation.

It will be up to the trustees, headed by Lord Armstrong of Ilminster, the former Cabinet Secretary, to decide whether to bring in compulsory admission charges. Dr Borg said the voluntary system was silly and made people feel uncomfortable and he would prefer to remove the voluntary charges.

Meanwhile, the V&A is planning to renew its premises by launching an architectural competition for a £40m building on part of its site. It will apply for up to £20m of millennium funding for the project.

BBC gets \$1m for Diana interview

CLARE GARNER

The BBC has been besieged by bids for the rights to broadcast the Panorama interview with the Princess of Wales and yesterday raked a reported \$1m from a single deal with ABC, one of America's major networks. Billed as an ABC News Special, the interview will be broadcast on Friday 24 November at 9pm.

ABC, which struck a news-gathering partnership with the BBC in July 1993, outbid its three main rivals for what is being dubbed the scoop of the century. The BBC insisted that ABC paid a "fair market rate" but refused to be specific about the price paid.

As Britons sit down to watch the interview on Monday evening, the programme will simultaneously be broadcast by BBC World and BBC Prime which together reach 46 million homes worldwide.

At a press conference yesterday, Panorama reporter Martin Bashir said the Princess

of Wales was given no preferential treatment and insisted that there had been "no paid intermediary... no Mr Big or Mr Fix It" to secure the interview. "I was able to outline the general areas of discussion but no specific questions were given to anyone beforehand," he said.

Mr Bashir insisted that the interview had emerged from more general research into the monarchy and said the BBC had approached the Princess rather than the other way round.

"The invitation came from us. It was not suggested to us by anyone else," he said. "You know and I know that you use first hand sources if you can," he added.

Mr Bashir, who in the past has presented *Songs of Praise*, said that because he had never done a royal story before, he had been unaware of the enormity of the scoop.

Mr Bashir was unable to predict what effect the interview would have on the monarchy, saying he was "a professional doing his job".

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FROM UNDER

Portillo backs crime-fighting role for forces

CHRISTOPHER BELLAMY
Defence Correspondent

Defence resources may be diverted to help fight drug trafficking and international organised crime as they become more of a threat to national security, the Secretary of State for Defence, Michael Portillo, said yesterday.

But he added that such a move would not prejudice the traditional roles of the armed forces and that they needed to retain the ability to fight full-scale wars as well as taking on new roles.

Because future conflict could arise anywhere and for many reasons, intelligence would be the key to defence in future, he told service chiefs and top civil servants.

Although weapons technology will continue to be transferred to Third World countries, Mr Portillo said it was vital that Western countries retained their superiority in intelligence, using modern information systems.

Mr Portillo was giving his own views on British security in the year 2010 to an expert audience. He softened the view on Euro-

pean defence co-operation which he had expressed at the Conservative Party conference, but stressed that individual nations, and Nato, remained the "most credible" defensive organisations. Sources at the MoD stressed the speech was his own work and not been written for him.

Mr Portillo said the growth of crime and "inner-city alienation" might diminish the self-confidence of democracies and make them more introspective. "At the same time," he said, "drug trafficking and international organised crime will be seen as a greater threat to national security even than they are today. Defence resources may be diverted to combating them."

MoD sources said that the defence resources to be diverted would be mainly intelligence and communications, although Navy and Air Force units could be involved in the interception of smugglers - a role for which they have always been available.

The move would be consistent with recent proposals to involve the security service (MIS) more in tackling organised

crime. The need to use defence forces might arise as international drug cartels became better organised and more heavily armed, MoD sources said.

Mr Portillo stressed the need to develop automated battle-field command and control systems, which would be "the key to success, and the key to minimising casualties". The need to minimise friendly casualties was particularly acute as people would become less tolerant of mistakes, he said. He added that Britain would therefore need to continue to work closely with the US.

Mr Portillo said the age of deterrence had not ended but that deterring people had become much more complicated in a more "diverse" world. "The nation state remains the most credible unit of deterrence," he said, citing the examples of Britain in the Falklands war and of Israel. He added that "deterrence" might also be used to counter state-sponsored terrorism - in other words, a terrorist attack on London might be answered by a massive strike on a foreign target known to be responsible.



Security risk: MPs are pressing for a 'safe' area for media interviews after the College Green attack on Brian Mawhinney. Photograph: Tom Pileton

Students declare war over Asylum Bill

PATRICIA WYNN DAVIES
Political Correspondent

Supporters of Wednesday's point and flourish attack on Tory party chairman, Brian Mawhinney, yesterday convened a follow-up press conference in their London college, declaring "war" on the Government over the proposed Asylum and Immigration Bill.

The act of defiance came as pressure increased from Tory MPs for a dedicated "safe area" close to the Palace of Westminster in which broadcast interviews could be conducted with ministers and MPs.

The police were forced to apologise for taking 20 minutes to respond to frantic 999 calls from Alan Duncan MP, the chairman's parliamentary aide, after Dr Mawhinney was accosted on College Green on his way to interviews after the State Opening of Parliament.

The Commons Sergeant at Arms is expected to hold an inquiry into the possibilities of a dedicated press area.

Betty Boothroyd, the Speaker, was said yesterday to have been concerned about possible risks to safety since the leadership contest in the summer, when the green was in constant use for media interviews.

Authorities at Kingsway College, Holborn, moved quickly to distance themselves from the holding of the news conference on its premises, saying it was convened in the canteen by Nick de Marco, student union president at Kingsway and an organiser of the Movement for Justice, which was behind the paint-throwing. Two A-level students at the college, Karen Doyle and Naveed Malik, both 18, were

arrested for assault on Wednesday, along with Amanda Egbe, 20, a sabbatical officer on the student union of the University of North London. Charges had not been brought last night. Mr de Marco said the protest "was a declaration of war against the Government. If it tries to introduce the most racist Bill ever and send people back to their deaths, we will stop it in any way necessary."

US veto could stall Nigeria oil embargo

The Labour Party yesterday pressed the Government for an embargo on Nigerian oil exports - both as a lever to end the bloody denial of human rights in Nigeria and as a means of stemming the tide of asylum-seekers coming to Britain. But although an embargo was not ruled out by Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind, privately ministers feel there is little prospect of getting such a move through the UN security council.

Were the Government to take up the call by Robin Cook,

ed there will be 40,000 applications for asylum in Britain of which only a small number will be accepted.

With MPs on both sides continuing to press for the Bill to go to a special standing committee so that evidence could be taken from experts outside Parliament, Mr Cook said foreign policy had a part to play in removing the pressure of refugees. Human rights should be at the centre of foreign policy, starting with Nigeria.

"Given all we now know about the brutality of that regime, it is very difficult to understand why it is that over the past 12 months out of the 2,032 applications for asylum from people from Nigeria, one has been granted and 2,031 have been rejected?" Mr Cook asked.

"Can the foreign secretary put his hand on his conscience and tell us that 99.95 per cent of those applications were bogus?" Mr Cook asked.

He also stressed the long-term role development could play in curbing economic migrants and said it would be "grotesque" if the Budget brought cuts in overseas aid.

Opening the day's debate, Mr Rifkind ignored the warning by his predecessor Douglas Hurd against "empty noise and phoney warfare" and concentrated on ridiculing Labour over its CND past and U-turns on Europe. He said that while recognising the benefits that the EU continues to bring to Britain, the Government wanted to make it work better. "The Prime Minister has made it clear that we will support moves at next year's Inter-governmental Conference towards a union which was fairer, more flexible and more relevant to ordinary people through more effective co-operation in areas like foreign and security policy and the fight against crime."

Intervening, Denis MacShane, Labour MP for Rotherham, protested that after Mr Portillo's "vile, xenophobic, ranting speech," at the Tory conference, no British government containing him could be taken seriously on any European question.

Watched by a smiling Mr Portillo, Mr Rifkind told Mr MacShane: "I am sure you feel better having got that off your chest. But it bears very little relevance to the issues before us."

Inside Parliament
Stephen Goodwin

the shadow Foreign Secretary, in the resumed Queen's Speech debate, a senior ministerial source said it was likely the US would veto it. The US imports about 50 per cent of Nigeria's oil, but Britain imports little.

Mr Cook said an embargo would be the best way to bring home the revolution felt at last week's hanging of nine environmental activists by the Nigerian regime. "I am familiar with the dilemma that applying economic pressures to a regime can bring pain to its people, but the whole point of Ken Saro-Wiwa's campaign was that the peoples of Nigeria saw too little of the revenues from the oil," Mr Cook said.

Mr Rifkind said no option was excluded. "What we are primarily concerned to do is identify measures that won't harm the Nigerian people but make international condemnation of the Nigerian Government clear and unmistakable." It was "right and proper" that the Commonwealth had suspended Nigeria and that Britain had imposed an arms embargo.

Mr Cook saw the restoration of democracy and human rights in Nigeria as one way of helping to reduce the number of applications for asylum in Britain - an issue the Government has chosen to deal with through its controversial Asylum and Immigration Bill.

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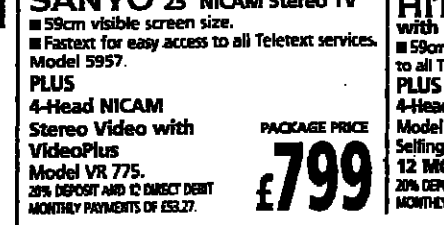
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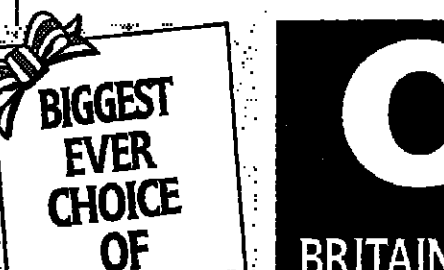
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fighting the activists: 13

Car culture creates new level of dependence

DAILY POEM

Quartz, Quince, Sex

020 150 150

Fighting the activists: Bloodsports lobby launches £3.5m advertising campaign aimed at countering influence of animal rights movement



Country matters: Members of the Grafton Hunt in Oxfordshire out cubbing on one of the first hunts of the year

Photograph: Tom Pilton

New group to step up battle in the countryside

DANNY PENMAN

Britain's newest and probably most powerful bloodsport and countryside lobbying group was launched yesterday with a £3.5m advertising campaign.

After months of secret preparations, the Countryside Movement was founded to protect the interests of rural Britain as well as those of the hunting, shooting and fishing lobbies.

The movement claims that rural Britain is poorly understood by urban dwellers and seeks to build a greater "awareness and understanding" through expensive and sustained advertising campaign.

According to secret minutes of meetings held by the organisation obtained by the *Independent*, high on its list of priorities is countering the growing influence of animal welfare groups. It also aims to tackle land access groups such

as the Ramblers' Association. One of the full-page advertisements, which will appear in national newspapers from today, pictures a slaughterman. The caption reads "George Roberts head slaughterman and animal lover". Another advertisement

tackles organisations lobbying for greater land access rights. Beneath a picture of a footpath reads the caption "It goes right across farmer Stockdale's land. No one's defending your right to use it more than him."

The Countryside Movement, which is supported by some of Britain's richest and most influential landowners, drew criticism from the Ramblers' Association and the International Fund for Animal Welfare.

Both groups accuse the new movement of being a front for the blood sports lobby and those who wish to restrict public access to the countryside. David Beskine, a Ramblers' Association spokesman, criticised the footpath and right to roam advertisement and demanded its withdrawal. "Survey after survey has shown that the greatest problem walkers face in the countryside is obstruction of footpaths," he said.

"There's a host of popular movements in this country concerned with animal rights, preserving the countryside and the right to roam and they [the Countryside Movement] think they can alter their growing influence with money. I don't think they'll succeed."

The IFAW described the adverts as "patronising, glossy and totally without substance". Sir David Steel, the movement's executive chairman, said the aim of the advertising campaign was to build up a huge database of people with an interest in all aspects of the countryside who could be mobilised over key issues that affect them.

Car culture creates new level of dependence

CHRISTIAN WOLMAR
Transport Correspondent

People have become so addicted to their cars that they even use them for many journeys of under half a mile, according to research for the RAC.

The study, called *Car Dependence*, paints a picture of a society so transformed by widespread car ownership and use that most people can no longer think of life without wheels. The bald statistics of increasing car use show that, between 1950 and 1992, car ownership per household increased almost tenfold and as a result, people travelled, on average, three times as many miles per year.

As with all addictions, car dependence grows slowly. People buy a car when they can afford it and gradually their lifestyle changes so that they become unable to conceive of no longer having one. For example, they move to areas with little public transport, they obtain jobs too far away to travel by any other means or they have children who then need transporting.

Once people own a car, they make much less use of public transport and therefore the widespread increase in car ownership has sharply reduced the provision of public transport.

There has been, in particular, a sharp growth in the number of trips for shopping and for escorting children, both to school and to leisure activities, many of which involve short journeys. For example, nearly 7 per cent of journeys of under half a mile are now by car - nearly double the proportion in the 1970s. And 8.2 per cent of car journeys involve trips of less than one mile.

People in rural areas are the most dependent on car use, often being "forced" to use cars when their income cannot really support car ownership and therefore they sacrifice spending money on other basics such as food or housing.

International evidence suggests that car dependence is growing in nearly all developed countries. In only two countries is the proportion of journeys by car not increasing: in the US, where car use has virtually reached saturation point, for 98 per cent of all journeys, and the Netherlands, where the Government has long had a policy of introducing radical measures to encourage other modes of transport, such as rail and cycling.

Shall we walk?

Methods of transport used for journeys of under half a mile	1975-1976	1988-1991
Walking	93.3%	90.7%
Car	3.8%	6.9%
Bus	0.1%	0.2%
Rail	0%	0%
Cycling	2.6%	1.9%

The research, which used both existing data and new surveys, suggests that for around 20 per cent of journeys, cars are virtually the only means of making the trip. In about 60 per cent of cases, the journey could be made by other means but it would either take longer or be much less practical.

The RAC says the report shows that efforts to reduce traffic by imposing blanket measures on all motorists, such as petrol price increases or road tolls, are misguided.

Edmund King, the RAC's head of campaigns, said: "We should concentrate on trying to reduce the number of journeys in the 20 per cent of cases where there is actually a genuine alternative."

However, the report warns that allowing current trends to continue, transport conditions are bound to deteriorate since there will be more traffic on the roads and fewer alternative forms of travel.

Car Dependence is produced by the ESRC Transport Studies Unit, Oxford University, price £25.

Leading article, page 20

DAILY POEM

Quartz, Quince, Sex

By Frederick Jones

Everywhere the walls are invisible as habit, remote. For the child the room is huge plains, each with its own geography of dust, sun and planets; only the window

shows they're walls at all. But glance through this window's single eye, and what's outside turns out the same as what's within, a pair of facing mirrors' endless reflections.

Newton timed the echo in Trinity Quad, and conned the pentagram and hexagon for some pattern outside the wordlist. Seven bands of colour cross the darkened room

- and viridian, mauve, magenta, cyan, what of these? Fresh from the rowing eight and dressed to the nines a minister declares a decade of cult is what you will.

Frederick Jones lectures in Latin and Ancient History at Liverpool University. He was the 1992 winner of the Felicia Hemans Prize for Lyrical Poetry and was shortlisted winner in the 1991 Northern Poetry Competition. *Congreve's Balsamic Elixir*, his first collection from which this poem is taken, (Faber, £6.95), is an intriguing compote of sweet and sour miniatures of time and place.



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10
internationalBonn opposition
picks leader fit
to tackle KohlIMRE KARACS
Mannheim

Amid scenes of jubilation befitting a great election victory, Germany's main opposition party, the Social Democrats, yesterday dumped the unpopular Rudolf Scharping, and acclaimed the colourful Oskar Lafontaine as their new leader.

The stunning coup, hatched overnight by Mr Lafontaine after a rousing speech at the SPD's conference in Mannheim, sent shivers down the spines of conservative politicians in Bonn. Helmut Kohl's Christian Democrats, 14 points ahead in the latest polls, now face an energised opposition no longer dragged down by a leader devoid of ideas and charisma.

Until yesterday morning, Mr Scharping stood unchallenged for the post of chairman. Then, as fate would have it, he was asked to step down. "I asked Oskar if he was going to be a candidate," Mr Scharping told the hushed audience. "Oskar answered my question by saying he would run."

The announcement brought the roof down, rewarding Mr Scharping with the first real table-thumping ovation at a conference already into its third day. The party really took off an hour later, when the result of the ballot was read out. Mr Scharping, his pallid features turning ever paler, seemed to be choking back tears as his popularity within the party he has

led for two years was enumerated. Mr Lafontaine, who led the party's unsuccessful electoral challenge to Mr Kohl in 1990, had received 321 votes; Mr Scharping, defeated by Mr Kohl last year, a derisory 190.

"I was of the view that we needed clarity," Mr Scharping muttered. "Now we have it." The new leader faces the task of uniting Social Democrats behind policies that can challenge the conservative hegemony. After a series of regional-election setbacks, the party has plunged to its lowest poll rating since the war. Although Mr Lafontaine has only won a two-year term, his role in preparing the Social Democrats for the 1998 general elections will be crucial. "I am aware of my responsibilities and depend on all of you to support me," he said in his victory speech.

If charisma were all they needed, the Social Democrats would be home and dry. Mr Lafontaine, the 52-year-old prime minister of Saarland, has bags of wit and charm, and a populist touch that few can match. He also has quite a reputation as a bon vivant.

In 1992, Saarland's parliament discovered that he was paying himself a state pension, at the age of 48, on top of his salary as prime minister. Mr Lafontaine was forced to spin a convoluted fable about cash flows and his high cost of living in order to escape censure.

His tastes might be expensive, but his origins and politics are humble. The son of working-

class parents, the new SPD leader is on the left of the party, embodying the blue-collar values that are finding ever fainter echoes in the 1990s. As German industry migrates to rural regions in the south or exports jobs to cheaper countries in Europe, the ranks of the class-conscious working class are dwindling. Even in his native Saarland, Mr Lafontaine's most noted recent achievement is the profitable conversion of a derelict foundry into a theme park.

His leftist leanings have been seized upon by Mr Kohl's party as an electoral liability. "With the election of Oskar Lafontaine, the SPD is leaving the political centre ground," commented Peter Hintze, the Christian Democrats' general secretary.

But economic reality has tempered Mr Lafontaine's socialist zeal, and he has proved adept at toning down some of the rhetoric. In foreign affairs, he remains firmly on the left, however. His passionate argument against the use of German warplanes in the Bosnian peace-keeping mission earned him loud applause on Wednesday. Mr Lafontaine's misgivings about European monetary union were not so well received. As the Christian Democrats have warned, the new leader "will whip up passions" about the common currency, even in the teeth of bitter protests from the party's Euro-wing.

Whether he resorts to the populist tricks Mr Kohl fears re-



Tête-à-tête: The new SPD leader, Oskar Lafontaine (right) with Rudolf Scharping, whom he ousted yesterday

Photograph: AFP

mains to be seen. The SPD leader might have learned the lessons of the 1990 general elections, when his chauvinistic campaign against German reunification was swept aside by the voters. Mr Lafontaine, then the SPD's candidate against Mr Kohl, added up the sums and proclaimed that East Germany would cost a lot more to West German taxpayers than the conservatives were admitting. Ultimately, he was proved right, but that was long after Mr Kohl romped home in triumph.

The memories of that fatal misjudgement of the nation's mood are still vivid. After 13 years in the wilderness, the Social Democrats would be loath to suffer another defeat in three years' time and are therefore keeping their options open about Mr Kohl's next challenger open. That task may yet fall to Gerhard Schröder, the strutting prime minister of Lower Saxony, who does not disguise his burning ambition to take on Mr Kohl. Whether he gets the chance or not, from now on the going will get a lot tougher for the Chancellor, and life in the SPD will be a lot more interesting.

Pilot scheme has chauvinist overtones

Ezer Weizman is "perhaps" a male chauvinist, he acknowledges, but has no regrets about his criticism of Israeli government policies. Described as moving "from figurehead to hammer head", the 71-year-old President has been getting into a few scrapes lately. His latest was with Alice Miller, a soldier who won a legal battle to become a military test pilot.

Mr Weizman, himself a former fighter pilot, says he didn't mean to offend her when he called her "Maalele" — "Missy" in Yiddish — and wondered if she had ever seen a man darn socks. Asked on television if he was a chauvinist, he replied: "Perhaps, perhaps," adding, "I think there is some criticism I need to take to heart, and I will take it to heart."

The pilot issue has long been a Weizman *bête noire*. Asked

several years ago why Israel had no female air force pilots, he proclaimed: "The best men to the cockpit, the best women to the pilots."

The President, whose role is largely ceremonial, has been critical of Israel's peace agreements with the Palestinians. "I thought the pace was too fast. I felt duty-bound to say so," The Tourism Minister, Uzi Baram, thinks he should simply shut up. "Weizman is president for better and for worse," Mr Baram said. "For a long time, it has been for the worse."

Pele is a rarity among black Brazilians: an opinion-maker. Now the sports minister and retired football star wants to spur others to do something about a country in which blacks are prominent in sport and entertainment, but not in gov-

PEOPLE



Pele: Rare opinion-maker

ernment and the military. To improve their lives, he told the newspaper *Jornal do Brasil*, black Brazilians must alter the racial make-up of Congress. "If the black man wants to improve his social level, he

must put our people in Congress, people who will defend our race and resolve our problems," he said.

"On the other hand," Pele added, "the lack of black congressmen has a good side, in that today politicians have a bad reputation of being corrupt. At least blacks don't carry that burden."

The kidnapping of Rigoberta Menchu's cousin's baby has been solved. Guatemalan police have arrested the child's mother, Cristina Menchu Zapeta, and husband, Miguel Velasquez Lobos, for abducting their own son on 4 November in an extortion attempt.

Police say the couple had asked Ms Menchu, the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize winner and human-rights campaigner, for a loan but she had refused them.

The boy's father, they said, subsequently took 22-month-old Juan Carlos to his own mother's house, telling her he was having marital problems. Ms Menchu then received a demand for \$500,000 for his safe return. No money was paid, and the child was found a week later, having allegedly been abandoned in a field.

While Juan Carlos was unhurt, Ms Menchu's reputation may have sustained some damage. After the boy disappeared, she was quick to blame the government, saying the kidnapping was designed to scare her away from political activity. Even some of her supporters would like to do that. They have criticised her for allowing herself to be sucked into a system she has long opposed.

Maryann Bird

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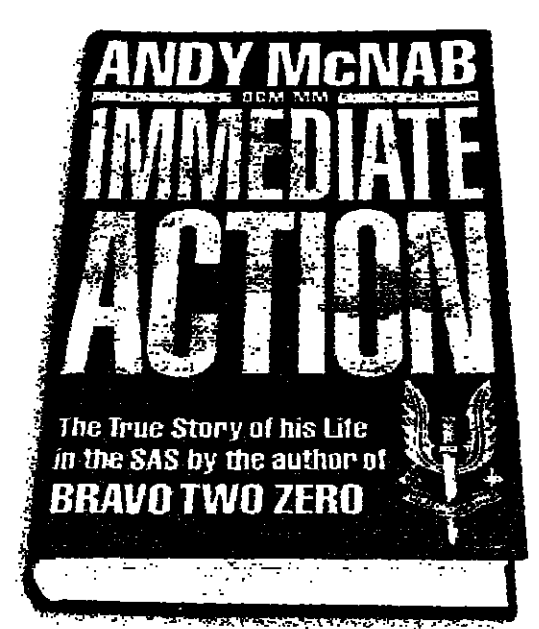
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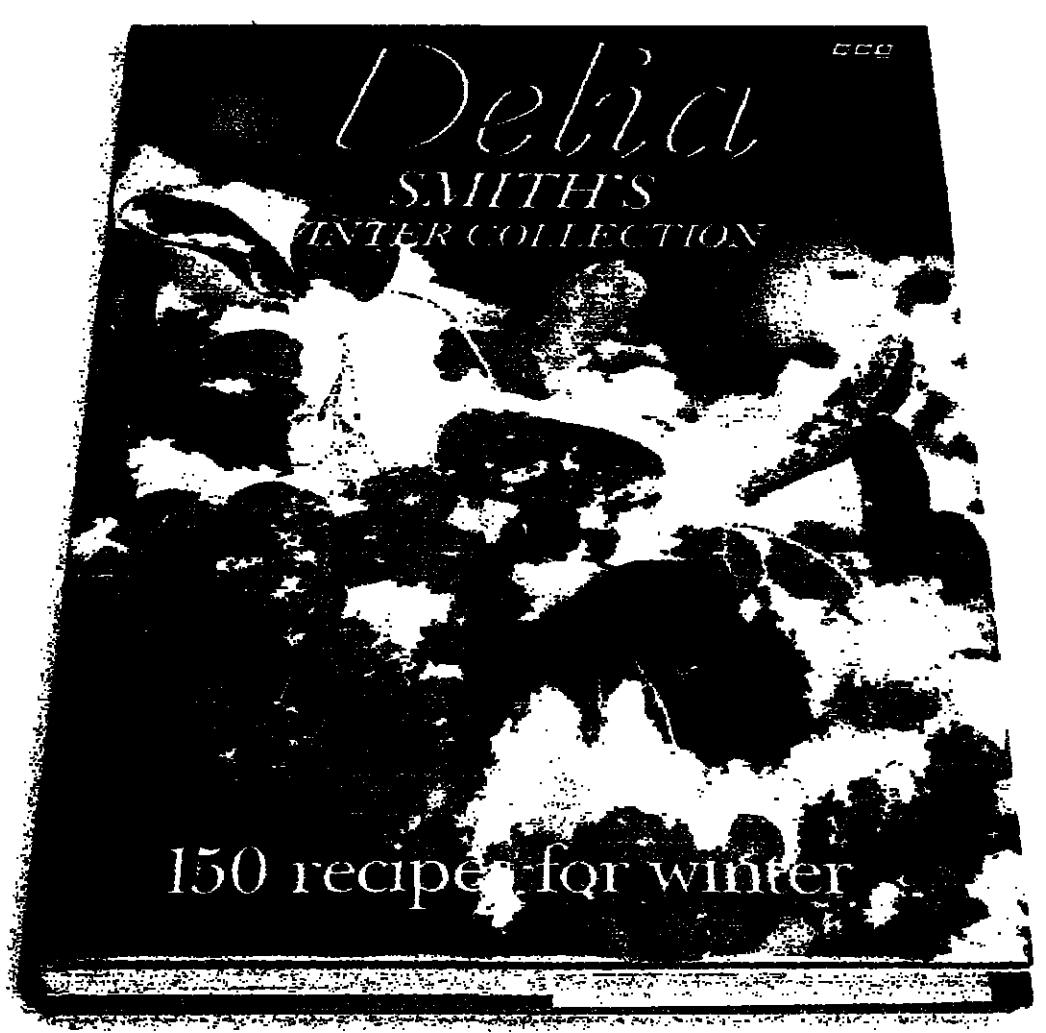
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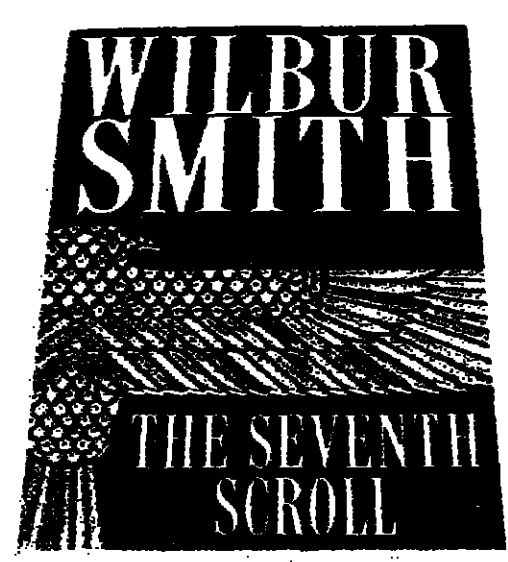
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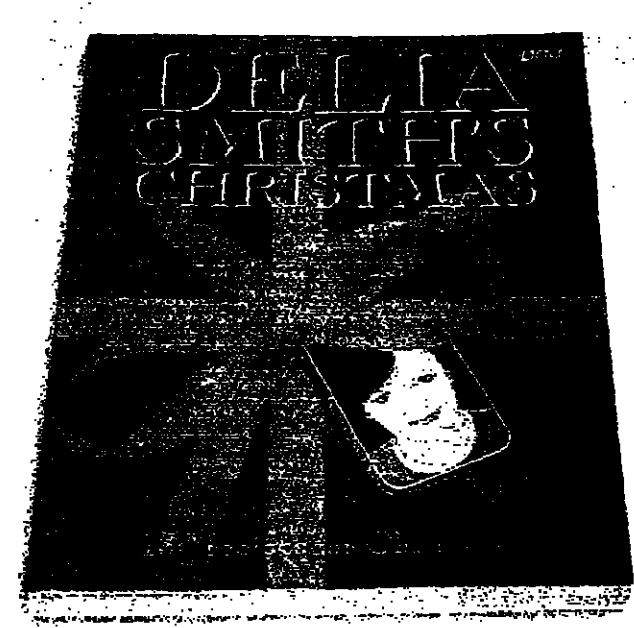
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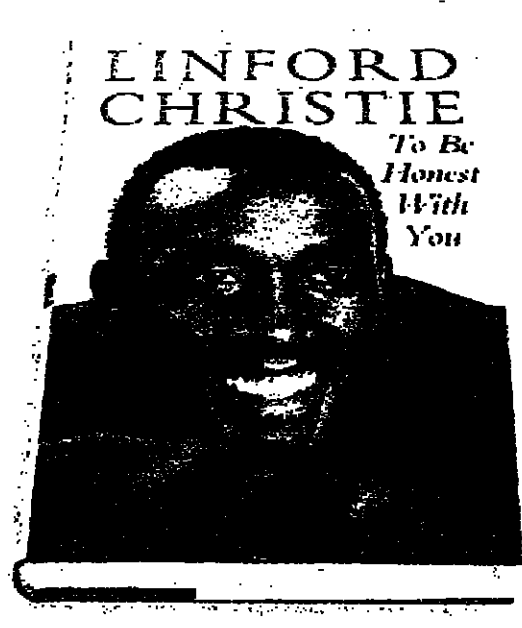
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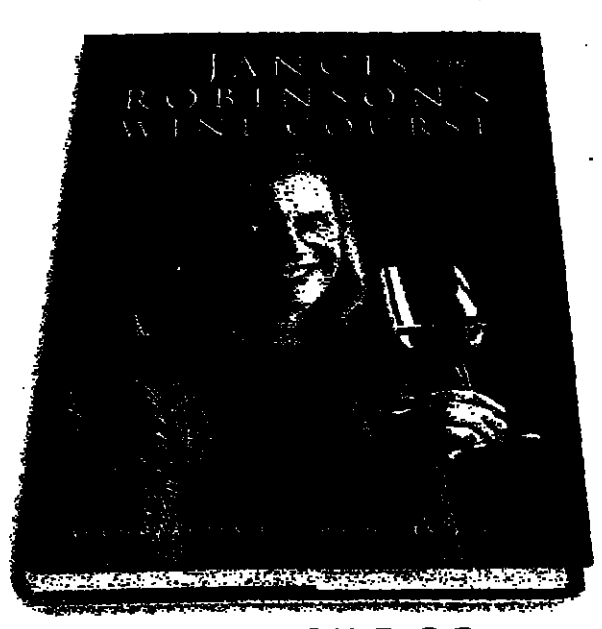
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Algerian elections:
Confusion
the 'bal

Bank threatens
to foreclose on
Winnie's home



السؤال الأول

Algerian elections: Despite blood-curdling threats from armed Islamist groups, people did turn up to cast their votes

Confusion dominates the 'ballot for peace'

ROBERT ASK
Boushau, Algeria

In the yard of the Ahmed Aroua Preparatory School, Sheikh Mahfoud Nahnah held aloft two frightened birds. "With these pigeons," he shouted to the camera crews, "I send a message of peace for Algeria and for the whole world." At which point, the candidate released the two terrified black and white birds into a mulberry tree. Tatty old pigeons, feathers falling out but too tired to struggle when a youth snatched one by the wings and hauled it back into the crowd. Sheikh Nahnah was on his way to vote.

It had all been billed a little more dramatically. *El Watan* had promised us "the longest day" while *Le Tribune* decided that the very act of voting in Algeria's presidential elections would bar the fundamentalists from power. "If you vote, you die," concluded *Le Main*'s cartoonist of the Islamist threats against those going to the polling booths. "If you don't vote, you die," he went on, referring to those who claim that the elections were the last chance to avoid full-scale war. "So: vote and die." If the thought was unoriginal, it at least reminded you of the small inside-page article - inside because government press laws have decided that it should be that way - recording the death of 16 "terrorists" in various police and army ambushes across the country.

So first, the facts. Algerians did vote yesterday. Despite the blood-curdling promises of the armed Islamist groups, men and women turned up at the fortress-like polling stations to

cast their ballot in the first poll since the military-backed regime suspended parliamentary elections in 1992 - elections which would have been won by the Islamic Salvation Front (the FIS), which is banned and forbidden to participate in yesterday's "step in democratisation".

But what were Algerians voting for? Were they voting against the FIS by ignoring the threat of their armed Islamist supporters? Were they legitimising a presidency that is of doubtful legitimacy by the mere act of turning up at the polling stations? Or were they legitimising ex-General Liamine Zeroual as President by voting for him anyway? Could Sheikh Nahnah stand a remote chance of winning? And what were all those Algerians doing who voted for the FIS three years ago - up to 56 per cent of them if the FIS themselves were to be believed - when polling stations opened? Sheikh Nahnah, the Islamist of the better-heeled classes - whose Hamas party boasts a Palestinian *infada* poster with a broken Star of David in its offices but has as much in common with the Palestinian Hamas as the Tory party does to the Shining Path - was in fine form outside Algiers. There were veiled women and middle-aged men in robes turning up to vote - too frightened to talk to reporters but all expressing the vague hope that the poll might mean an end to violence - and the girls ululated when Sheikh Nahnah laid hands on another bunch of pigeons.

"This is for Algerian independence," he shouted as he threw another old bird into the air. "And this one is for tolerance. And this one is for the true

image of Islam." The creatures fled in terror. "And this pigeon is against terrorism and violence," he bawled. "And this one is for peace and security." Independence, peace, tolerance, the true Islam, security, an end to violence. How easy it was to hurl these birds into the sky under the Algerian midday sun.

Sheikh Nahnah never cared much about Islam - he talked about democracy all the time because he's afraid of Islam, a supporter of the more intellectual Islamist presidential candidate, Nourredin Boukhrouh (presidential chances zero) muttered later.

"He has no vision at all; he just wants to get elected. Zeroual will stay. *Le Pouvoir* (the establishment) wants to keep him. Things will continue as they did before. Algeria will go on burning."

So confident was Mr Zeroual that he didn't bother to take up all the television time allotted to his campaign - he was too busy representing Algeria at the United Nations - but the intellectual classes, the military, the old *nomenklatura*, will have found it difficult to resist the chance of voting yesterday for a man who has promised sta-

bility, a return to democracy, an end to war.

Sheikh Nahnah, once an acquaintance of FIS leadership, will create an Islamic republic, his enemies say.

Said Saadi, the leader of the Berber "Front for Culture and Democracy", will - according to his enemies - launch a civil war if Sheikh Nahnah wins. So why not vote for Mr Zeroual?

Back in party headquarters, Sheikh Nahnah's men were resiliant. Hamas support was more spontaneous than Mr Zeroual's, they said (true - men flocked to hear Sheikh Nahnah, but it needed drum-rolls to tell Mr Zeroual's boys to start cheering). "The government's armed Communal Guards are opening the way to the Lebanonisation of Algeria," one of Sheikh Nahnah's faithful complained. "The constitution of Algeria forbids such militias - and they have been shooting at our election posters."

Those pigeons were flying again, higher and higher. Stare at them long enough and you might have been able to forget that at some point, whoever wins, the Algerian president will probably have to sit down and chat to the FIS all over again.



Frank franchise: An Algerian woman gives a cheery V-sign as she waits with others amid heavy security to cast her vote in the country's presidential election
Photograph: Fatma Zohra/Reuters

Bank threatens to foreclose on Winnie's home

ROBERT BLOCK
Johannesburg

Winnie Mandela, the estranged wife of South Africa's President, Nelson Mandela, and the country's favourite political sideshow, is now living - literally - at the centre of a controversy: her modest mansion a few blocks away from the shacks of Soweto.

The two-storey house - a place of pilgrimage for the busloads of tourists who daily visit Johannesburg's most famous township - has been attached to her bank over mortgage arrears. According to lawyers for Amalgamated Banks of South Africa (Absa), Mrs Mandela has not made her mortgage repayments for "a long time" and the bank started foreclosure proceedings. "A warrant of attachment against the property was issued and the property was attached by the sheriff of the court last month," said Richard Nesbit, who represents Absa. "Right now, the bank is in a

position to sell the house by public auction if it so wishes. We are awaiting instructions from the bank," he added.

Mrs Mandela can still make arrangements to pay the 505,260 rand (£90,000) outstanding, but has so far ignored bank pleas to do so. Sources at Absa said the banking group was reluctant to foreclose on the mansion because it feared a political and public relations disaster. "The possibility of having to toss Mrs Mandela out of her home is not exactly the kind of positive image the bank wants to project," one source said.

But by yesterday it was not just the house which was in danger of going on the auction block but everything inside as well. Mrs Mandela had until close of business yesterday to pay R75,000 to an air charter company which successfully sued her this week for failing to pay for a plane she hired in 1993. If she missed the deadline, the court could attach any of her possessions not already claimed by Absa.

The thought of losing the house that Mrs Mandela built for her husband's homecoming after 27 years in prison was more than some could bear. Yesterday, a group of German tourists outside the Mandela mansion was told by their tour guide how the house had been paid for by a famous movie star and President Bill Clinton. All reports of Mrs Mandela's financial woes, the guide said, were simply untrue.

Some former associates of Mrs Mandela suggested that her failure to pay for the house was in some way linked to her fight against the divorce proceedings started by her husband. In documents filed to the Rand Supreme court in Johannesburg last month, Mrs Mandela denied her marriage had broken down irretrievably, and said that with proper counselling there were prospects for reconciliation. On the other hand, if the President wanted to go ahead with the divorce, she wanted half his assets.

Despite poor relations with her husband and a series of scandals which continue to haunt her, Mrs Mandela still has a huge following among poor township blacks and residents of squatter camps.

The political mainstream of the African National Congress, however, continues to shun her. Earlier this year Mrs Mandela was sacked, rehired on a technicality, and then fired again from her job as deputy arts minister following criticism of her husband's government.

Several months ago police raided her home and offices to investigate allegations that her Co-ordinated Anti-Poverty Programme (Capp) was linked to fraudulent business deals.

Capp figured again prominently in this week's lawsuit by the Foster Webb Air charter company. Mrs Mandela's lawyers had argued in the Rand Supreme Court on Wednesday that she had hired a plane from the company to facilitate a diamond deal in Angola between the Angolan President, Jose Eduardo Dos Santos, and a local businessman, Ben du Preez. Witnesses said Capp stood to earn commission on the deal, undermining her defence. Mr du Preez told the court that Mrs Mandela wanted instant riches through the deal. It fell through because when Mr du Preez arrived in the Angolan capital, Luanda, Mr dos Santos said he knew nothing about it.

Mrs Mandela failed to appear several times to give evidence. On the final day of the hearing, she left for a trip to the US.

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for its establishment. Our job will be to give a voice to the countryside, and to represent the five million or so people living and working in rural Britain. We will also speak for millions of people living in Britain's towns who nonetheless recognise the countryside as our greatest national asset. It will be constructive. For example, we in The Countryside Movement recognise that crucial new development, especially where it means new jobs, inevitably means the loss of some of our countryside. But we will also be putting the case strongly for proper redevelopment of derelict land in inner city areas. We will also promote good practice in all aspects of country life and aim to foster better awareness and understanding of the countryside among visitors and the public as a whole. Fundamentally, The Countryside Movement believes that those who live and work in the countryside are best qualified to look

after it. And that for far too long their collective voice has gone unheard amid a crescendo of demands and protests from a tiny minority of the well intentioned but ill informed. If you share this view, what should you do? If you believe that Britain's countryside is a precious part of our national life, and something that should be valued and preserved, then show your support for The Countryside Movement. Fill in the coupon or phone 0117 976 8900. There are no subscription fees. Just the right to make your voice heard.

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Trial of the century: The main player now cuts a sorry figure but the supporting cast is wheeling and dealing with a vengeance

After OJ, the cash still goes round and round

JOHN CARLIN
Washington

Are Marcia Clark and Christopher Darden, the black and white prosecutors in the OJ Simpson trial, having an affair? Will they walk down the aisle together? Or is Darden "seeing" Anita Hill? Will OJ's girlfriend, Paula Barbieri, have him back? Will any woman take him? Who scored the bigger book deal: Johnnie Cochran, OJ's defence lawyer, or Ms Clark?

For all the best efforts of Bill Clinton and Newt Gingrich to focus national attention on the budget, it is these and other questions that continue to agitate the celebrity-mad public. "Juicewatch", the tabloid soap opera, just runs and runs. Some of the questions have been answered. Some still linger, as unresolved as the murders of Nicole Brown, and her friend Ronald Goldman. Ms Clark and Mr Darden were seen on holiday together at the Lake Tahoe resort a few days after the trial. They were photographed coming out of a Los Angeles hotel. So they *might* have been involved. But sadly, no, they are not getting married. Ms Clark said during a speech at a women's conference in Long Beach, California, on Tuesday that she "burst out laughing" when she read the report in a supermarket tabloid. But, yes, according to sources at the William Morris talent agency, their client Mr Darden is engaging in consensual sex with Anita Hill, a law professor from Oklahoma who leapt to fame a few years back when she accused Clarence Thomas, the Supreme Court judge, of sexual harassment. William Morris have an interest in perpetuating the Darden mystique, for they helped him sign a publishing deal worth \$1.3m with HarperCollins: a nice sum but \$2.9m less than Ms Clark secured from Viking for her book.



Close encounter: Prosecution and defence lawyers crowd together during the OJ trial. From left: Johnnie Cochran, Marcia Clark, Robert Shapiro and Christopher Darden

Mr Cochran has also signed up for a book: *My Journey to Justice*. He has obtained "a very substantial multi-million dollar deal". But his refusal to specify just how much he is getting suggests he is miffed at Ms Clark for having lost the legal battle but winning the Battle of the Books. Alan Dershowitz, another lawyer of the Simpson "Dream Team", is picking up a mere \$500,000 for *Reasonable Doubts*, a book he says will be of an academic bent.

OJ, meanwhile, is cutting a rather sorry figure. He has

been kicked out of his favourite golf club; he has been dumped by his agency, Creative Management; he continues to be bombarded with death-threats;

he still faces ruin in pending "wrongful death" civil suits brought by the Brown and Goldman families; no one has yet made him an offer to write

a new book; and last weekend he endured the ignominy of being told to stay away from a sports memorabilia convention in Atlantic City: he had been

hoping to sell autographed photographs, at \$159.95, of the highway pursuit that preceded his arrest in June 1994.

The word is that OJ spends

most of his time at his Los Angeles home doing nothing – and alone. Ms Barbieri, a 28-year-old *Playboy* and underwear model, dumped him live on

ABC television a couple of weeks back. She said she had stayed celibate during OJ's imprisonment but was disappointed in her hopes that he would return a better person. What did it, she said, was his proposal that they should sell photographs of their reunion to the highest tabloid bidder.

"It was all of a sudden. 'Well, they'll play lots of money for pictures of you and I together,'" Ms Barbieri told ABC. "And then the next thing I know he's coming. And he's got the photographer with him."

In case anyone has failed to get the moral of the OJ story, that money in America is everything, here's the quote of the year from Ms Barbieri's brother, Michael.

Angry that his father and half-brother were paid to appear on television but that he had missed out, he told *People* magazine when they refused to cough up for an interview: "I'm not going to stab my sister in the back for nothing."

IN BRIEF

Roh arrested on kickback charges

Seoul — Roh Tae Woo, the disgraced former South Korean president, was arrested yesterday on charges of pocketing more than £195m from business tycoons in return for lucrative contracts. More arrests were expected.

Mr Roh, the country's first former or current head of state to be charged with a crime, was pelted with eggs and vilified by demonstrators as he was driven to the Seoul detention house. Minutes earlier, Mr Roh apologised to the nation on the steps of the Seoul prosecutor-general's office. "I'm really sorry," he said. "I will take all responsibility and any punishment."

A 1,000-page arrest warrant said 30 tycoons gave kickbacks to Mr Roh worth 500m won (£420,000) to 25bn won (£21m), a district court judge said.

US Attorney-General has Parkinson's

Washington — The Attorney-General, Janet Reno, disclosed that she has Parkinson's disease. She said the brain disorder is not adversely affecting her work and that she will remain at her job. "I'm taking my medicine. I feel fine now," Ms Reno, 57, said. Her only symptom has been trembling in her left hand, which she noticed last summer. The disease results from the death of brain cells that produce a substance called dopamine and use it to send signals from the brain throughout the body.

Slovakia bans use of other languages

Bratislava — Parliament has passed a strict language law curbing the use of any language other than Slovak and providing large fines for anyone contravening it. The move heightened tensions with the country's sizeable Hungarian minority. The CTK Czech news agency said that the measure would take effect some time next year.

Sri Lankan army prepares for final attack

Colombo — Sri Lankan troops halted their advance one kilometre from the Tamil rebel stronghold of northern Jaffna City and prepared for a final assault, military officials said. The army will rotate troops and consolidate positions during the next few days, the officials said. But they refused to disclose when troops were likely to move on the city.

No graven image

Amman — King Hussein of Jordan had a statue of himself (left) removed yesterday, hours before it was to be unveiled. Using a crane, workers lifted the statue out of a public square opposite the prime ministry building before dawn. There had been widespread criticism from Jordanians who saw an uncomfortable parallel with glorification of leaders in Iraq and Syria. "The king was unhappy with it and ordered its removal," said an official of the Amman municipality, which intended the monument as a 60th birthday tribute.

Saudi dissident 'not welcome in Britain'

London — A Saudi dissident who was quoted yesterday as having said US soldiers killed in a bomb attack in Saudi Arabia were "a legitimate target" is not welcome in Britain, the Foreign Office said. The *Middle East Mirror* reported Mohammed al-Masfari, leader of the Committee for Defence of Legitimate Rights, as having made the remark, according to Foreign Office officials, as having made the remark, according to Foreign Office officials. Mr Masfari said his remarks were taken out of context. "I said it was the perception of the common man [in Saudi Arabia] that they [US troops] are a legitimate target."

Free-trade goal for Asia-Pacific

Osaka — Asia-Pacific ministers adopted a blueprint for regional free trade over the next quarter century. Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation ministers unanimously adopted an "Action Agenda" outlining how to achieve their aim of regional free trade by 2020.

MEPs call for oil embargo on Nigeria

Strasbourg — The European Parliament urged the European Union to impose an oil embargo on Nigeria to put pressure on its military rulers following the executions of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other minority rights activists last Friday. The MEPs also called for a freeze on European bank accounts of Nigerian leaders, as well as a sports boycott.

Former French minister jailed for gifts

Lyons — A French court sentenced Alain Carignon, a former communications minister, to five years in jail, two of them suspended, on corruption charges. Carignon was convicted for accepting gifts from Lyonnaise des Eaux in return for a water privatisation contract in Grenoble when he was mayor.

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PHILIPS

Rabin investigation: Lax security exposed as Yigal Amir demonstrates how he shot Israeli Prime Minister

Killer with a smile re-enacts assassination

PATRICK COCKBURN
Jerusalem

Protected by a white bullet-proof vest, Yigal Amir rushes up to a man wearing a paper tag reading "Yitzhak Rabin" and pretends to shoot two bullets into his back. The policeman playing the role of the murdered prime minister crumples to the ground just like the real Rabin did on the night of 4 November.

"You killed Rabin, you piece of garbage," shouts an Israeli watching the re-enactment of the assassination by the back steps of Tel Aviv city hall early yesterday.

Police hold back another man trying to break through their barricade who yells: "You should have protected the prime minister like this."

Mr Amir pays no attention but, like a stage director, pushes policemen into the places where he remembers people were standing moments before he fired 12 days previously. Everyone except for a single bodyguard - 20 Shin Bet security agency guards were meant to be protecting Rabin that night - is ordered back.

When Mr Amir is satisfied that everybody is in position the policeman in a red check shirt who plays Rabin starts to bow his head to get into a limousine, the door of which is opened. As he does so Mr Amir moves smartly forward into a wide open space behind him and his right arm goes up as he points a toy gun at Rabin's back.

Police re-enactments of crimes are common in Israel but the demonstration by Mr Amir of how he killed Rabin underlines the chronic failure of Israeli security. Earlier Mr Amir pointed out to police the public phones behind the steps where he was addressing people at a peace rally.

ment took place, there are not many people in the streets of Tel Aviv; those who did watch were kept well back. The ferocity of the investigation - "Take off your kippa [skullcap], you dog!" shouted one onlooker - shows the depth of the anger felt by many Israelis over the killing. At one point Mr Amir appeared to grin at the abuse.

The Shin Bet security service and the police are still fighting over who is responsible for letting Mr Amir get a clear shot at Rabin. In theory the Shin Bet has taken full responsibility for intelligence and operational failures. But it has also revealed that the head of Rabin's security detail had told the police officer in charge on the night of the assassination that there were not enough men

guarding the steps down which the prime minister was about to walk. The police officer replied: "Don't tell me what to do."

Violence is still not far below the surface despite back-peddling by militant rabbis who had previously denounced Mr Rabin as a traitor. Rabbi Nahum Rabinovitch, who runs a military-theological college with 200 students at Ma'ale Adumim settlement to the east of Jerusalem, while denying allegations that he set the stage for Rabin's death, is recommending to his students that they plant mines if Israeli soldiers try to remove settlers from the West Bank.

In a tape-recording made by an orthodox moderate named Yitzhak Frankental and later published in the Israeli press, Rabbi Rabinovitch says that if soldiers come to uproot settlers he intends "to scatter the area with roadside bombs like the Arabs do". Asked about Israeli soldiers who might be killed by the mines, Rabbi Rabinovitch says that only "evil men" would obey orders to evacuate settlements.

Dror Adani, one of eight suspects under arrest as possible members of the conspiracy to kill Rabin, said yesterday he had been sent by Mr Amir to a rabbi to get authorisation to kill the prime minister. He says the rabbi turned him down but it is not known if Mr Amir was able to get the required blessing from another one of Israel's 5,000 orthodox rabbis.

Shimon Peres, the acting prime minister, says he will also take over as Defence Minister when he announces his new cabinet next week. Israel radio reports. This means that Ehud Barak, the former chief of staff, will take over as Foreign Minister. The Defence Ministry will play a critical role in organising the redeployment of Israeli troops from Palestinian cities on the West Bank.



Fatal moment: Amir finds his 'target', a policeman in a red shirt acting as the Israeli leader

Photograph: Reuters

Gingrich admits budget tantrum

RUPERT CORNWELL
Washington

The US budget row degenerated into petulant farce yesterday as the White House heaped ridicule on Newt Gingrich for an outburst of pique which the House Speaker admitted had helped prompt the government shut-down.

The rumpus started at a meeting with reporters on Wednesday, at which Mr Gingrich complained about the shabby treatment accorded him and the Senate Republican leader, Bob Dole, aboard Air Force One during the round trip to Israel for the funeral of Yitzhak Rabin 10 days ago.

"Every President we had ever flown with talked to us at length," the Speaker said, but not Mr Clinton. "You just wonder where is their sense of courtesy... Was it a sign of utter incompetence or lack of consideration, or was it a deliberate strategy of insult?"

The crowning insult appears to have been when the Congressional delegation was asked to leave by the back door of the President's plane at Andrews Air Force Base at 4am on 7 November. Pique, Mr Gingrich confessed, had helped harden his line on the budget. "It's petty... but I think it's human."

Such a chance to ridicule its arch-enemy was too much for the White House to pass up. Leon Panetta, the President's chief of staff, called the Speaker's behaviour "bizarre and petty" and it was outrageous that the government had been shut down "because his ego wasn't stroked". The White House also released photos taken aboard Air Force One showing Mr Clinton deep in conversation with Mr Gingrich and Mr Dole.

The New York Daily News meanwhile skewered Mr Gingrich with a front page depicting him as a screaming toddler with nappy and bottle, below the headline "Cry Baby." Newt's Tantrum, it continued, "He Closed Down Government Because Clinton Made Him Sit at Back of Plane."

For ordinary citizens the inconvenience grows. More than 750,000 federal workers are laid off, with scant hope of a breakthrough before the weekend.

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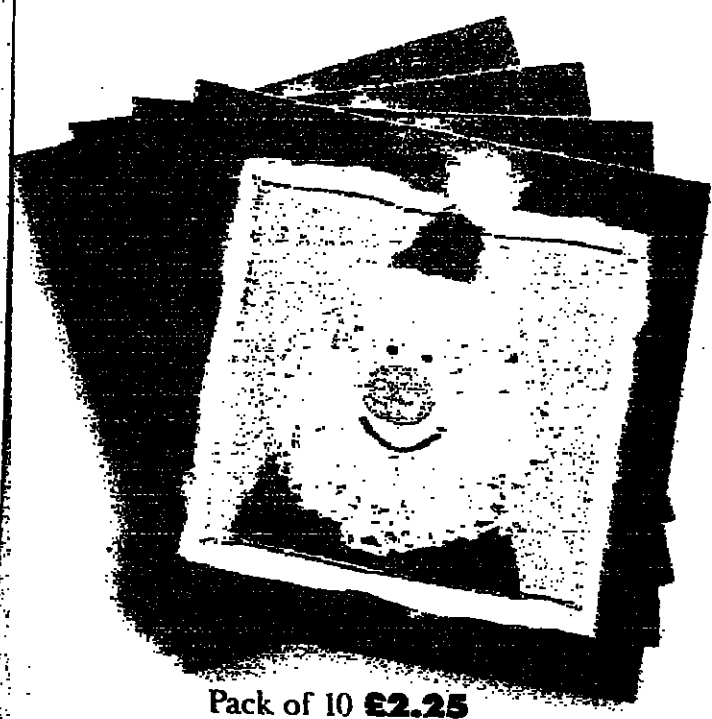
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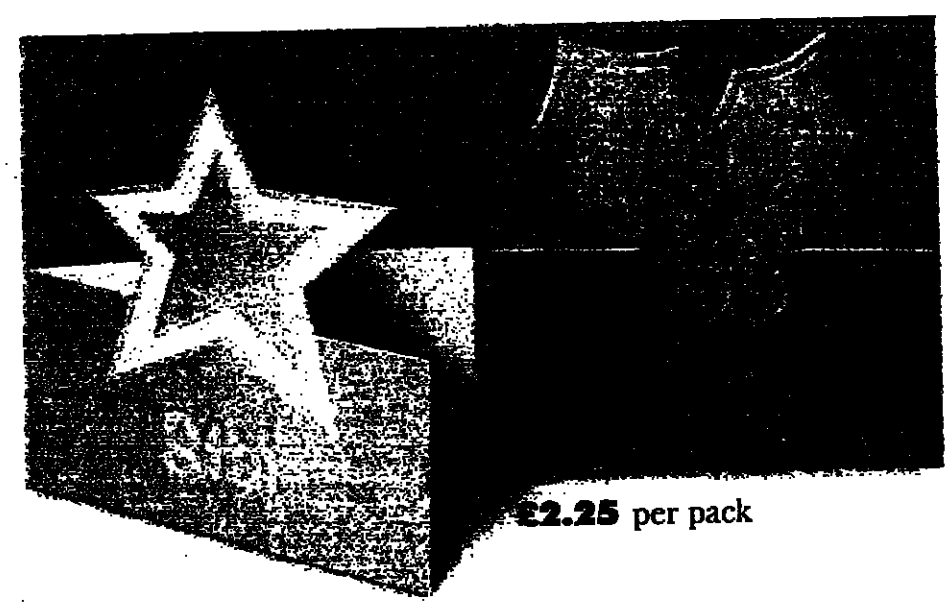
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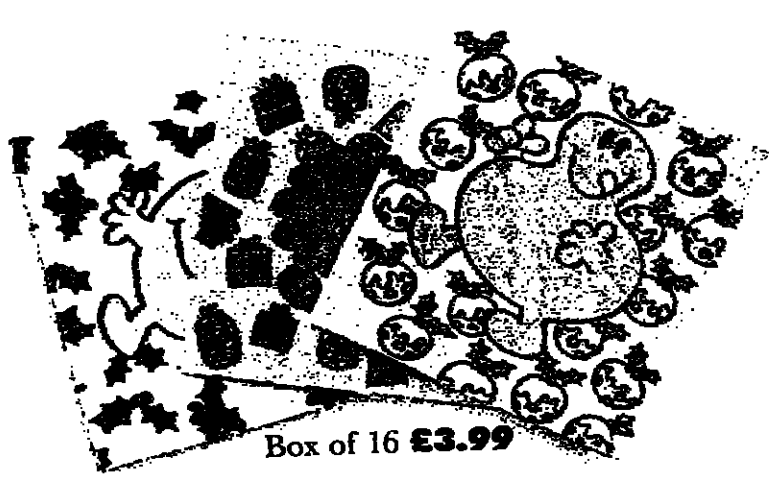
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Ian Paisley, leader of the Democratic Unionist Party
The idea of sitting down at the same table as Sinn Féin is anathema to him. Opposes Dublin's involvement in talks about Northern Ireland. Would probably boycott round table conference, at least initially.

Gerry Adams, president of Sinn Féin
Has called for immediate all-party talks. Says Britain only raised issue of decommissioning as a precondition after the ceasefire. Argues that no ceasefire in Irish history required surrender of weapons before comprehensive talks.

John Hume, leader of the nationalist SDLP
Says all party talks should start at once. Argues that the important issue is not whether the IRA still has arms, but whether they plan to use them. Is convinced that Sinn Féin is committed to peaceful politics.

David Trimble, leader, Ulster Unionist Party
The IRA would have to decommission arms, and perhaps disband altogether. But if the IRA surrendered even a few weapons, Trimble would come under heavy pressure from the British Government to join talks.

John Bruton, premier, Republic of Ireland
Ready for all-party talks now. Favors dropping the decommissioning precondition. Has proposed new approach whereby talks would go ahead six weeks after an international commission had established Sinn Féin's good intentions.

John Major, Prime Minister
Demands that the IRA begins to decommission weapons before Sinn Féin joins talks. Wants international commission to arrange terms for dealing with IRA's arsenal. But Government has backtracked before, could do so again.



Will they ever get round that table?

Is the once unthinkable now possible: a lasting peace without a political settlement in Northern Ireland? Jack O'Sullivan reports

Today more than 80 republican and loyalist prisoners will walk free from Northern Ireland's jails. Their early release shows how the peace process can still deliver results. But today's scenes will mask a dangerous reality: progress towards a political settlement, the vital underpinning of peace, is in deep trouble.

Fifteen months after the IRA laid down its arms, all-party talks look like no more than a distant hope. Britain will not sanction them until the IRA makes at least a token surrender of arms. The Provisionals have, in a rare public statement, refused point blank to make the gesture, leaving neither side with much room for manoeuvre.

Meanwhile, the relationship between the Irish Republic and Britain — the rock upon which a settlement could be built — has deteriorated of late. President Clinton's planned visit later this month to Belfast, Dublin and London may be abandoned and, in any case, holds little prospect of breaking through the impasse.

Worse still, there are signs

that guns and bombs are being taken from arsenals that have remained undisturbed for months. A week ago the Irish police discovered 1,700lbs of explosives just across the border in the Republic. Police believe that the massive bomb was to be used in an attack on

It would be wrong to assume that frustration will persuade the IRA to unpack its Semtex

a security target in Northern Ireland.

Amid the political stalemate, is peace breaking down?

No, is the immediate answer. Last week's foiled bombing was not the work of the Provisional IRA, by far the best-armed republican element. The blame

has been laid on the military wing of Republican Sinn Féin, which broke away from the Provisionals in 1986. It is a small, insignificant group, which claims to be the guardian of purist, uncompromising republican ideals. The activities of this fundamentalist splinter group do not signal a general breakdown in the cease-fire, to which the IRA apparently remains committed.

But the fact that a bombing was even considered indicates a change in the atmosphere in Northern Ireland. A few months ago, as one republican remarked, even extremists would not have contemplated such a "spectacular". They would have feared being rounded upon by the rest of the republican community for endangering potential gains from the peace process. Now, after such a long stalemate, the opprobrium is diminished. There seems to be less to lose.

So does this mean it is only a matter of time before the Provisional IRA eventually takes up arms again?

There is certainly frustration among northern republi-

cans. Sir Patrick Mayhew, the Northern Ireland Secretary, speaks of the many changes since peace broke out. But, complain republicans, most are security measures that would have been ordered if the IRA had been defeated, rather than concessions to a supposedly potent force.

Many republicans feel that the potential gains envisaged one year ago have not been fulfilled. Twelve months ago Sinn Féin was on a roll. Albert Reynolds, the then Taoiseach, was at one with Gerry Adams and prepared to press Sinn Féin's case with London. In contrast, Mr Reynolds' successor, John Bruton, is far less friendly with Sinn Féin. He won nationalist plaudits by attacking London last weekend, but Mr Bruton is by instinct anti-republican. He wants to woo the Unionists and has as a consequence cold-shouldered Sinn Féin, thereby alienating Mr Adams.

It would, however, be wrong to assume that republican frustration is about to persuade the IRA to unpack its stores of Semtex. Mr Adams has demon-

strated no desire for a return to the killing. He seems to have accepted some time ago that military victory was not achievable in Ulster. Were he to lead his troops back into battle, he would lose whatever influence Sinn Féin has acquired over the past two years in Dublin and Washington.

Additionally, no matter how slowly politicians go about the task of creating long-term agreement, there is little community pressure to restart their campaign. This is not 1969, when Catholics were being burned out of their homes and the IRA was expected to play a protective role.

So, with the IRA likely to remain confined to barracks, can we stop worrying about a return to violence? Probably. It is now quite possible to imagine a lengthy period, perhaps even years, in which an absence of violence continues in Northern Ireland, despite a lack of political development. This is a prospect that few commentators would have predicted back in September 1994, when the IRA laid down its weapons. At

that stage most people, notably within the British government, thought the cease-fires would soon falter.

The receding threat of violence may indeed be allowing John Major the luxury of not pressing ahead quickly with developing a political settlement. His key concern right now may not be to bolster peace with political change but to make sure that talks begin only when conditions are right. This is a delicate task. The history of all-party discussions in Northern Ireland is of boycott by at least some of the main players. And even if discussions do get going, they usually collapse in acrimony.

Mr Major has probably accepted that Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionists would not attend an all-party conference, at least until it was well under way. But he must persuade David Trimble, the recently-elected leader of the more moderate Ulster Unionists, to come on board. Talks without him would be a waste of time.

It may therefore serve Mr Major's purposes to delay all-

party talks as long as possible, so that Mr Trimble can be persuaded to join the process and stick with it.

All of this analysis suggests the slow rate of progress in Northern Ireland should not necessarily be seen as provoking a crisis in the higher reaches

The history of all-party discussions is of boycott by at least some of the major players

of the IRA and hence an outbreak of killing. But there is an important risk from delay. A peace that was not underpinned by political change would to some extent be unstable. There is a danger that it could be vulnerable to break-down, brought about not by the

IRA but by an unfortunate conjunction of events that had no single author.

Last summer, Ulster offered a glimpse of these dangers. There were the riots over the early release of Private Lee Clegg, who had been convicted of murdering a Catholic joy rider. A head-on confrontation between nationalists and unionists followed about an Orange march through a Catholic part of Portadown. As disturbances escalated there, and in riots on Belfast's Ormeau Road, it was possible to see how Northern Ireland might once again descend, almost accidentally, into a spiral of violence.

Everyone knows that the last time communal disturbances got out of hand and turned into the Troubles, it took 25 years before all the participants stopped the killing. The risk of such an unplanned deterioration should, as much as the thinking of the IRA's military command, preoccupy those politicians who think they can delay settling Northern Ireland's constitutional future.

Wilkes's

Wilkes was not alone in giving a private cheer at Brian Mawhinney being sprayed with orange paint by Asylum Bill protesters outside the House of Commons. The video of the incident was apparently played more than 10 times over lunchtime by gleeful BBC staff at the nearby BBC Westminster Studios at Millbank. The chairman of the Conservative Party has few friends at the BBC after railing against the corporation for left-wing bias at the party conference, and some were said to be cheered up enormously by the video.

There may also have been a faint cheer from inside the Blue Bunker itself. All is not well inside Central Office since the arrival of the Ulster Hardman, who gathered his staff for a pep talk yesterday. Morale has plummeted, and the departure of Hugh Coffer, the former head of communications, is regarded as a symptom of a deeper malaise.

Nor was there much sympathy in the Commons. One of those close to the chairman quipped: "He was overcome with emotion."

John Ward, the Prime Minister's parliamentary private secretary, is an unassuming chap, who stays quietly in the background. But Wilkes hears he deserves a medal, and possibly the modern Russian equivalent of the Order of Lenin.

Ward was all that stood between Major and a monumental gaffe over the premature reports of the death of Boris Yeltsin.

Wilkes can now reveal the full story. Tory backbenchers were settling down for Prime Minister's question time when a pager went off in the chamber, belonging to Alan Duncan, Brian Mawhinney's parliamentary private secretary. The message came from Tim Collins, temporarily restored as head of communications at Central Office. It said the BBC was about to announce that the Russian president was dead and wanted a reaction from a minister.

Panic set in on the Conservative



Mawhinney: orange disorder

Wilkes always goes to the best parties, and the Nolan recommendations have done nothing to impinge on his convivial lifestyle. So it was that Wilkes was delighted to quaff champagne at Spencer House, the Princess of Wales's former family townhouse in St James's, for the 10th anniversary of a leading PR firm, the Communications Group. Guests included Alan Wakeham, Labour's Doug Henderson and Sir Patrick Mayhew, the Northern Ireland Secretary, whose former special adviser Jonathan Caine has joined the PR firm. Then it was over to the launch party for the collected essays of Norman Lamont, where Wilkes drank House of Commons claret and rubbed shoulders with the old gang, including Lord Parkinson and Sir Robin Day.

Wilkes is glad to report that Lamont has lost none of his gift for the well-turned phrase. Rejecting the range of figures showing the economy has turned belly-up, Lamont insisted that they were all wrong. "It's a false dusk," he giggled.

Wilkes is a constitutional monarchist of the first order, in spite of the efforts by the Princess of Wales to advance the cause of republicanism. Wilkes needs to hear only two words — "President Thatcher" — to confirm his royalist instincts.

But there is a limit. Wilkes can put up with Prince Charles's watercolour of Windsor Castle signed "C 90" which greets visitors at the entrance to the MP's offices at No 1



The Prince: gannup on Wales

Parliament Street, and even the unflattering portrait of the Prince which makes the heir to the throne look like a paranoid bloodhound. However, Wilkes learns with deep dismay that the PoW has been brushing up on the Principality by having a private briefing with the Secretary of State for Wales. First he has a chat with Redwood, the Vulcan; now he's been having a private word with his teenage successor, William Hague. Neither of them is Welsh, and both know as much about Wales as Wilkes's left shoe.

Des Wilson and Olly Grender, both former leading lights in the Liberal Democrats, have become the Joanna Lumley and Jennifer Saunders of the PR world. Des, now with the PR firm London News, shared a table at a glitzy PR awards dinner with his old friend Olly, who has moved to Shelter. As the night wore on, Des grew more bitchy about the winners, which was a bit tricky for Olly, darling, because, as Joanna would say in *Absolutely Fabulous*, you see, sweetie, she was one of the judges, and his agency didn't get a prize.

Staff at the Department of Health broke into joyous cheering at the State Opening of Parliament. Was this a rush of royalist blood to their heads? No, simply they had heard that their old boss, Virginia Bottomley, had been turned back from Parliament by the police, because she was 15 minutes late for the ceremony and her car could not get through the security. Funny how she brings out the best in people.

Wilkes's old chum Lord Wakeham has been privately boasting that he has had an immediate effect on Fleet Street as the head of the Press Complaints Commission. He has closed down the telephone line set up by Sun hacks for dancing partners of Prince William to switch on his social activities now that he has started at Eton. The "snog line", as it was informally known (Wilkes cannot imagine why) was a breach of the boy prince's privacy, and thus Wakeham intervened.

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Beware a new wage spiral

How does a pay rise of 5 per cent sound to you? It is higher than inflation and well ahead of the average pay settlement. It is certainly better than the public sector will get this year. Yet once you stop to think about how much harder you are working, the new contracts which make your job less secure, the growing profits your company is making, and the soaring salary of the chief executive, then you might not feel it is unreasonable.

Your reaction matters a great deal to the economists who are watching the dispute at Ford over the management's pay offer of 4.75 per cent. If pay settlements start rising following the Ford example, we could be in for the wage boom that the Bank of England fears. But if the rest of the economy remains cautious and subdued, unaffected by the deals done at Dagenham, then pay and inflation could keep crawling along at their current rate.

In the past Ford's pay settlement mattered a lot. Wage increases at Ford used to be "the going rate" — they set the standard in the car industry and for the rest of manufacturing. But it would be surprising if the old situation still prevailed. Wage bargaining has become increasingly decentralised and the workforce less unionised. Pay setters in the service industries probably focus far more on their own profits and skill shortages than they do on manufacturing pay. And as employment in the service sector goes on rising, while employment in manufacturing continues to drop, then events at Ford matter that much less in the context of the whole economy.

Although Ford's pay packets may no longer be the trigger that causes rising wage bills across the economy, what happens there may still reflect the feelings of workers and management elsewhere. The Ford workforce is so fed up its members are prepared to strike for what they see as their fair share of the proceeds from productivity gains of the past few years — whether it be through wage rises above 5 per cent, or cuts in the working week in line with European colleagues. There could well be similar demands for wage rises across the economy which have been bottled up after several years of wage constraints.

Service-sector wages won't necessarily be immune to these pressures either. For although weekly earnings in the services remain subdued because there are so many part-time workers, hourly earnings for full-time workers have already been increasing at a rapid rate — 4.6 per cent in the year to last spring.

So just because the rest of industry and the economy no longer blindly follows Ford's lead, doesn't mean our pay is not about to start going up. The optimistic view is that the labour market has changed in such a dramatic way, that the old British wage inflation spirals have been defeated. The pessimists believe it is just a matter of time before old pressures resurface — wage claims could even start accelerating in the spring. The Bank of England is right to remain worried about wages, for it could take months, even years, to be sure who is right. By which time it could be too late.

Keep fruit on our streets

Life must be hell for the man from the council. All those complaints from aggrieved tenants, noise-averse neighbours, unpruned owners of uncollected rubbish — and so little time or money to deal with them. At least that's what they keep telling us. In which case, why has Derbyshire Council spent so much effort in getting a judgement against an Ilkeston greengrocer, against whose pavement display of fruit and vegetables no one had complained? The phrase "have they nothing better to do?" comes irresistibly to mind.

Ah, yes, says Derbyshire, but it's not so simple. True, no one had objected to Brian Godfrey's sidewalk plums, and yes, there had been no accidents or incidents, but the law is the law. "Pavements are for people and have to be kept free of obstructions for the benefit of pedestrians", apparently.

This argument mirrors that of Camden and Westminster councils in London, when this summer's balmy heat brought the tables and chairs of dozens of bistros and cafés out on to the capital's grimy pavements. Justifying the imposition of a series of fines and the sequestrations of some offending furniture, Westminster's Robert Moreland declared himself to be acting on behalf of "the partially sighted, disabled and pram pushers", forced to negotiate "unauthorised" tables and chairs (authorised ones, presumably emit a high-pitched noise to warn the partially sighted and fold down into ramps on the approach of wheelchairs or buggies).

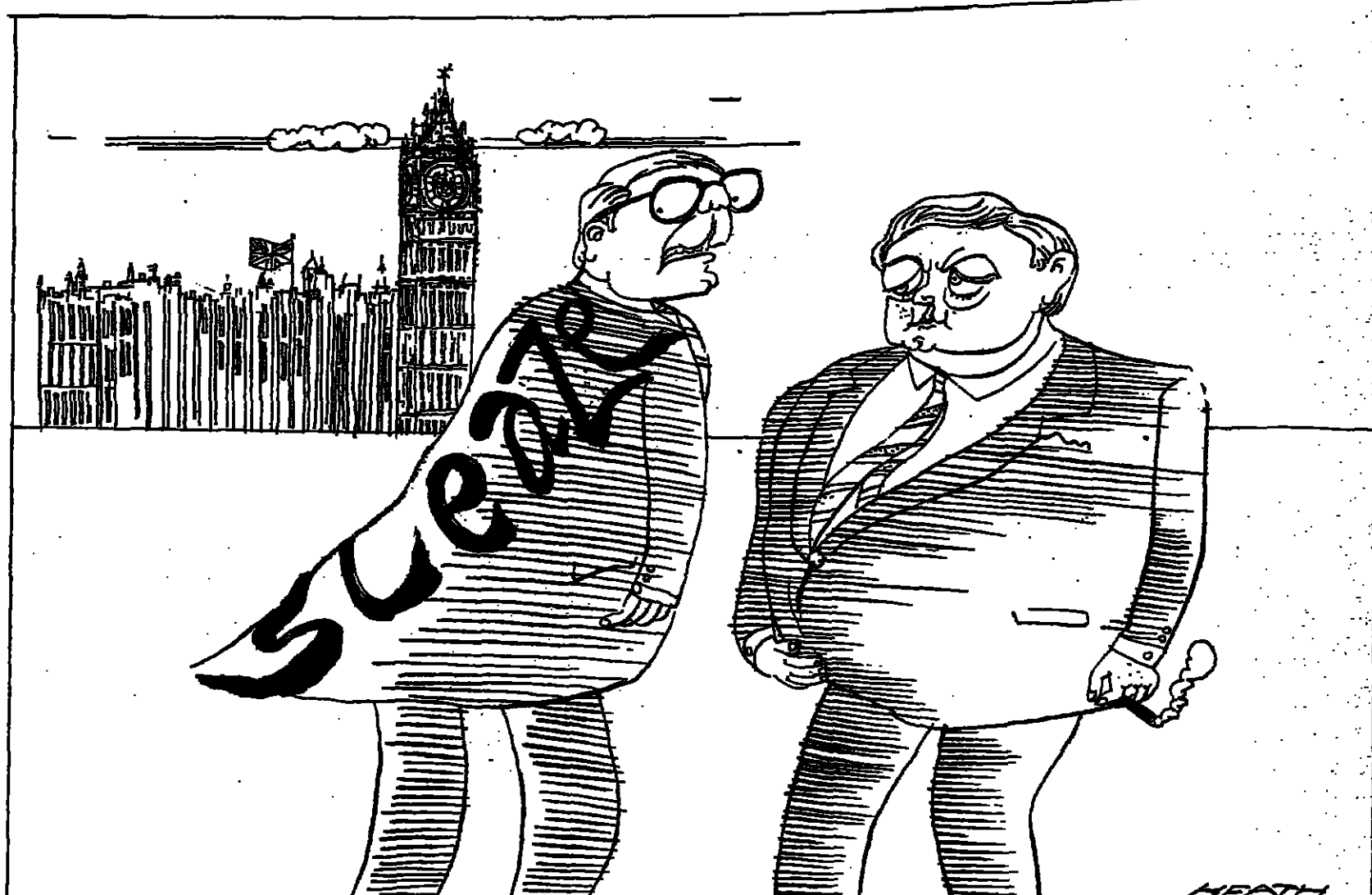
There is much in Mr Moreland's

argument. There must indeed be some restriction on the rights of traders to take over the public's footpaths — even though there seems to be none on the rights of cable companies utterly to disrupt the ability of almost anyone to go almost anywhere. Café owners, greengrocers and stall-holders must be considerate towards pedestrians, and where real nuisance is caused must be restrained.

There is a sneaking suspicion, however, that what is at issue here is not so much public nuisance as an official desire to control everything. Mr Godfrey, as far as we can see, was causing no problem. And, lest we forget, Derbyshire council last featured in these columns when it instituted a policy of not employing smokers. It isn't just the Labour councils which seem to be prone to jobsworthism.

As reported today, Tory Westminster is trying to insist that it is entitled to charge fruiterer Eric Carter for his pavement overspill — despite the fact that the space does not belong to the council. Their attitude appears to be that if something exists in public space, then they should get the benefit from it — or close it down.

Most people would like to see the growth of a lively (if regulated) pavement culture in Britain. The colour of fruit stalls and the hum of cafés is infinitely preferable to a dingy mélange of rubbish bins and cracked paving stones. Cars parked and moving — are far more of a problem to pedestrians and street-users than any exuberant displays of art-choke. The man from the council should get his priorities right.



I think it's paint ... whatever it is, it won't come off

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Does BSE harm people?

From Dr R. G. Will and others
Sir: Professor Richard Lacey asserts (Another View, 15 November) that BSE is "now established as a cause of sporadic Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD) in humans".

This is not true. CJD occurs round the world with a relatively constant incidence, including countries that are free of both scrapie and BSE. In 1994, the incidence of CJD in the UK was lower than in the Netherlands and in Austria, which are both free of BSE. The occurrence of CJD in dairy farmers in the UK is unlikely to be directly linked to BSE, because CJD occurs with a similar frequency in dairy farmers in France, Germany and Italy, which are countries with a minimal potential occupational exposure to BSE. The occurrence of CJD in teenagers in the UK is tragic, but this does not establish a link with BSE, because CJD has previously been described in teenagers in other countries in which there could not possibly be a link with BSE.

The primary remit of the CJD Surveillance Unit is to determine whether there is a link between BSE and CJD by detailed investigation of all cases of CJD in the UK. We have not yet established a link and the evidence on which this statement is based has been recently published in an Annual Report. However, it is clearly imperative to continue to study closely the epidemiology of CJD, as the long incubation periods in CJD and other prion-protein diseases indicates that it will be many years before a theoretical link between CJD and BSE can be excluded.

Yours faithfully,
R. G. WILL
JAMES W. TROSDIE
M. ZEIDLER
National Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease Surveillance Unit
Western General Hospital
Edinburgh
15 November

When costs increase Taiwan will say ta-ta

From Mr Anthony Smallhorn
Sir: Your Business Comment "Britain the back door to Europe" (15 November) is absolutely correct (about the nature of the investment by Chungwha in making cathode ray tubes in Scotland), but your arguments and warnings must be taken further. Taiwan and Korea were once cheap labour economies, which is why the Japanese, in particular, invested heavily in them. When labour rates, and manufacturing costs, for simple products such as televisions went too high the Japanese simply pulled out.

Four years ago, after manufacturing in Pusan City on the south coast of Korea for more than 20 years, a Japanese company closed a factory manufacturing exactly the same product as Chungwha will be making in Scotland. Three thousand people lost their jobs, and the same company set up a production

line in Thailand. Sooner or later, labour rates in Thailand will rise too far, and the company will move again, probably to an emerging African country. The warning for us is that it is even easier to move out of Britain as we have one of most free money markets in the world, and there is no skill in manufacturing this type of product.

Some £80m and a few thousand jobs may generate a few votes for the Conservative Party, and will bring relief to an area where unemployment is well over 2 per cent above the national average, but let us be warned by what is happening all over Asia. When they are ready, the Taiwanese will simply pull out of Britain. This will not build an "enterprise culture".

Nobody in Westminster has any concept of "enterprise" beyond the ability to invest in businesses linked to privatised utilities, the NHS and local gov-

ernment. Its latest "enterprise" wheeze is Business Link. To qualify, you have to employ more than six people, so a country solicitor, who has never exported a thing but has three offices and more than six full-time employees, qualifies for a 50 per cent grant to "teach him how to market"; while everywhere small, genuinely enterprising British manufacturers struggle to survive by exporting, using money borrowed at high interest rates from high street banks, and have little or no help from government.

British manufacturing industry is still in decline. Unless this is halted, there is no hope of an "enterprise culture", or a bright future, for this land.

Yours faithfully,
ANTHONY SMALLHORN
AS&A: Industrial and Engineering Designers
Hitchin, Hertfordshire
15 November

How the EU can get serious

From Mr Robin Teverson
Sir: Your leader today "The £2m question" (15 November) on fraud and waste in the EU correctly concludes "It is time the member states got serious about the problem". But you are short on prescriptions for making them do just that. The Court of Auditors, equally, makes no recommendations on what Europe can do to stir the member states into action, but there is no shortage of suggestions from other sources.

In the Liberal Democrat group, we have been pressing for a few simple changes that could quickly bring results. First, the European Commission needs a bigger stick to wave at the member states if it is to persuade them to act. In some areas it can withhold funding if it thinks fraud is going unchecked. Extend that to all EU-funded schemes, and you would soon see action.

Second, we need to make transparent a process that is all too opaque. Reports on fraud drawn up by the member states are prepared in secret, which leaves us all in the dark and suggests that they have something to hide. The reports must now be published.

Third, the European Parliament should be allowed to set up committees of inquiry. As a body independent of both the commission and the member states, it is well placed to arbitrate where culpability is in dispute.

These ideas are not the whole answer, but they are part of it, and they have growing support. In an aside yesterday, one member of the court suggested that, were it able to make such recommendations, similar ideas would be among them. For the sake of efficiency, accountability and, not least, lower taxes all round, it is, as you say, time to get serious.

Yours faithfully,
ROBIN TEVERSON
MEP for Cornwall and Plymouth
West (Lib Dem)
European Parliament
Strasbourg
15 November

Ecstasy v Prozac

From Dr Joanna Nakielny
Sir: In the article "Ecstasy and the agony" (Section Two, 15 November), Polly Toynbee asks what the difference is between a licensed medicine, such as Prozac, and a "street drug", such as Ecstasy. One very important difference is that licensed medicines have undergone extensive and rigorous testing in clinical trials. The results of these trials are then reviewed by regulatory authorities, such as the Medicine Control Agency here in the UK, which must satisfy itself as to the safety, efficacy and quality of any proposed new medicine before granting it a licence.

Ecstasy, by contrast, is an illegal drug that is not licensed for the treatment of any medical condition.

Yours faithfully,
JOANNA NAKIELNY
Associate Medical Director
Lilly Industries
Basingstoke, Hampshire
15 November

Round and round the round table

From Sir Fred Catherwood
Sir: Without John Hume's courage and persistence, there would have been no ceasefire in Northern Ireland, so we all owe him a great deal. But he is wrong to insist on yet another round-table between the parties ("It's good to talk, Mr Major", 15 November).

Once he brought Sinn Féin into the process, he created conditions which made an Irish settlement only possible by bilateral negotiations between the two sovereign governments.

It is not just that the Unionists will not sit down with — as they see it — a gun pointed at their heads, but that even if they accepted John Hume's arguments, they would have to make the settlement stick with all those Unionists who argued, when it came to a referendum, that a treaty agreed under threat of force was not binding.

By agreeing that the next step is yet another round table, the

British Government is now predictably boxed in by the incompatible preconditions laid down by Sinn Féin and the Unionists.

And for what? The last round table was a disaster and there is no reason to suppose that a new one would be any better.

The two governments have already achieved an agreed position. They each need to negotiate bilaterally with the parties who look to them and then with each other, and IRA arms and British troops can now be part of that negotiation.

At some point they must persuade the parties who look to them that they have got the best deal they can.

Then, and only then, should they bring them round a table, pen in hand, to sign the settlement.

Yours faithfully,
FRED CATHERWOOD
Cambridge
15 November

Le Shuttle U-turn

From Mr Christopher Laming
Sir: Eurotunnel has made a spectacular U-turn in its Le Shuttle marketing campaign, which now includes such familiar items as early-booking discounts, a third-off-duty-free promotion, cheap day-trips and, above all, discounted ticket prices.

Sir Alastair Morton, chairman of Eurotunnel, has continually criticised the ferry industry for "suicidal" price wars and other such competitive activity. Indeed, according to him, it is the actions of the ferry industry which have done so much to destroy the cross-Channel market. But his

criticism is nonsense, as any student of basic economics knows. Eurotunnel doubled capacity, and then moaned when competitor activity intensified. They tried premium-pricing their product, as they told their shareholders they would, but not enough customers wanted to buy. So now they have given that up and joined the economic world they helped create.

In doing so Le Shuttle has become another ferry company. The difference is that it cost its owners £10bn to set up. Yours faithfully,
CHRISTOPHER LAMING
Head of Communications
Stena Line
Ashford, Kent

Tape that

From Mr W. Stephen Gilbert
Sir: Monique Roffey ("Clive laughed, and suddenly I was sixteen again", 13 November) refers to "the live filming" of Clive Anderson Talks Back. Now what do you suppose live filming is? If the show goes out live — in other words, in its full spontaneity — it is not going to be filmed.

But it doesn't go out live; nor is it filmed: it is recorded on tape. Videotape is as important a medium as film. It's a pity that commentators and even television practitioners have taken to describing all television as "filmed" even when it is not.

Yours faithfully,
W. STEPHEN GILBERT
London, N8
16 November

Letters should be addressed to Letters to the Editor and include a daytime telephone number. (Fax: 0171-293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk) Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Lovely Rita, the prostitute who doesn't offer sex

Although I visit London at various intervals, or, to put it another way, as little as possible, I am still surprised by the amount of personal messages placed by people inside London phone boxes — announcements about a new Mexican girl in town, or busty Australian beauty, or Naughty Nina, and so on.

People who have mobile phones won't know about all this — indeed, people may well buy mobile phones for the single puritanical purpose of getting away from the constant array of prostitutes' cards they are forced to look at in phone boxes — but I know all about this, because every time I go innocently into a London phone box I suddenly get culture shock all over again.

But on my last visit to London I saw something quite different in a kiosk. I saw a prostitute's card which read as follows: "Rita promises you NO Hanky Panky! Hands off Rita! Keep your distance with lovely Rita! Ask for nothing and you won't be disappointed!"

This sounded a bit out of the ordinary. A girl who took your money and then didn't sell you her body.

Or was it code for something so recondite that I didn't even know about it?

I was intrigued. I was very intrigued. I was so intrigued that I made a note of the number.

Let's be honest — I rang her there and then.

"I am doing a survey of London phone box cards," I improvised hastily when Rita answered the phone. "I was just wondering what sort of customer you were catering for."

"Why don't you come along and find out, sir?" she said, and gave me an address. "Bring a video if you like." Then she rang off.

I think if she had called me "darling" or "love", I wouldn't have gone along to see her. But being called "sir" reassured me. I felt safe. I went along to see her.

"Did you bring a video?" she said. "No matter. There's plenty of other things to do."

"What kind of video did you expect me to bring?" I said nervously. "Sex, you mean?"

"Don't be stupid," she said. "Football videos are what punters



MILES KINGSTON

normally bring. Wildlife documentaries are next popular. I draw the line at feature movies. They take hours."

"You mean — people can only have sex while their favourite TV programme is on?"

She stared at me.

"Sex? What are you talking about? They come here to get away from it."

Gradually, as she talked, the truth came out. Most prostitutes catered for men who had little or no sex life at home, but Rita catered for another minority — those who had too much, men who suffered from sexually demanding wives or who for some reason had gone off the whole thing.

"You'd be surprised how many

men are just settling down for a quiet evening with a book or the TV when they are dragged off to bed by a concupiscent wife," said Rita. "All they want to do is be left in peace and quiet."

"That's what I give them here. They bring round the programmes they've missed and watch them here, while I potter around doing the housework or sewing. There's one bloke who always brings his ironing round and likes to watch me do that, while we chat. Of course, I have to charge him extra."

"But football on video is the main choice of men. It's often on late at night, and they're dragged off to bed for sex by the wife at that time, so they tape it and bring it round here, and watch it as they would have liked to watch it. I've got several regulars who do that. Some games I see four or five times over. And I must always remember never to reveal the result if I know it in advance."

Does she have to watch the programmes as well? Is that part of the deal?

"No, not necessarily, although you do find the occasional man who

gets a real kick out of explaining football to a woman in technical terms. So many women obviously get turned off by sport that when the men say to me, 'Did you see the way he drew his man and created space there?' and I say, 'Very nice running off the ball, too' — one of the phrases I've picked up, don't know what it means — they go red with pleasure."

"But what they like best, if you can believe it, is for me to dress up in something very revealing or skimpy and come smooching past saying, 'Are you coming to bed now?'"

Why do they like that? "Because it gives them a chance to shout at me, 'Oh, go and take a jump in the lake,' or, 'I wouldn't go to bed with you if we were on a desert island together!' — all those things they've longed to say to their wives, but have never dared. At least they know that when they come to a prostitute like me, during the hour they spend here they are quite free from sex."

"Funny old thing, human nature, isn't it?"

I think she may be right.

09/11/2015

Auntie in a flap over the F-word

BBC guidelines are the closest we have to a new prayerbook, but heaven help the taste committees

The man from the BBC who looks after taste and decency projected a silent graphic on the screen. He ran through it fast, but I did catch the top of the list of words with the percentage of the public who thought them totally unbroadcastable:

***	74 per cent
*****	70 per cent
*****	70 per cent
*****	55 per cent
*****	55 per cent

What the BBC proved at its seminar on taste and decency this week is that the subject is easily reduced to farce. The BBC invited its leading critics to debate with programme controllers and governors for a whole day of filth and violence. Clips from Ben Elton, *Backus* and *Lady Chatterley* interspersed the discussions. For the battle over broadcasting standards represents the moral dilemmas argued over in every household, every newspaper, every pub. For lack of any other binding institution – no widely attended church, or any other generally accepted moral standard-bearer – the poor old BBC must bear the brunt of representing to society what it thinks of itself, what it thinks its standards are. BBC guidelines are the closest we have to a new prayerbook, and as a result the best battleground for all our moral anguish.

Having recently come from inside the walls of this sometimes monstrous, yet magnificent citadel, the internal discussions day after day were some of the most stimulating and intellectually absorbing but also sometimes the most mind-numbingly desperate I have ever experienced. The burden of responsibility of a compulsory licence fee weighs heavily on BBC executives: £86.50 a year is a harsh poll tax on every household. It puts some of the

poorest into prison, for non-payment of fines – many of them people who barely watch the BBC and are positively hostile. It makes everyone jumpy, an organisation of panicky paranoids who quiver when the most mindless leader writer or backbencher says boo. Accused by many, including many at this week's seminar, as cultural imperialists, ivory tower dictators, arrogant and unaccountable, the truth inside is quite different.

Of course, the corporation arrived at the seminar well-armed with audience research showing how much more liberal attitudes towards sex on television have become in the past 10 years. The most conservative groups had shifted greatly, with older women moving from 33 to 41 per cent tolerance of sex and nudity. Changing attitudes towards homosexuality were most marked, with a 20 per cent drop in the numbers who find it offensive.

However, the fact that the viewers' values are on the slide was certainly not going to mollify the moralists. One of them put the dilemma succinctly: if the broadcasters keep pumping out sex, nudity and rude words, they themselves change public sensitivity. There is something devious about debasing the currency and justifying your behaviour by proving you are in tune with the people when you are a prime cause of the cultural shift you are measuring. If more people find gays on television acceptable now than 10 years ago, that must be in large part because in the past 10 years it has featured in virtually every soap.

What, someone asked, does the BBC think it is doing? Does it set moral standards and stick to them, does it follow whatever its polling says its viewers' standards are, or does it see itself in the forefront of positively setting out to change (and by implication liberalise) public opinion? This is tricky territory, since a simple "yes" to



POLLY TOYNEE
The BBC is not a pulpit, nor is it a mere crowd-pleaser

any of these is plainly both absurd and presumptuous. The BBC is not a pulpit, but nor is it a mere crowd-pleaser. It is not a slave to opinion polls, but an innovator and a leader, then of course it does have standards of its own, but try defining them and the eels slip through the fingers.

Five words can cover a multitude of difficulties. From the director-general we had "eternal values, truth and quality, excellence of thought and execution." Eternal values? Good heavens, we have just had a presentation that shows there are none, with everything constantly on the move.

For many, the argument descends here into unsatisfactory greyness and murk. But the truth of the matter is murky. Bernard Manning, Jim Davidson or Ben Elton – who makes you laugh, and who offends you most? Taste is so impossibly personal that only the grossest trespassing on new territory draws a clear consensus. (There is far more agreement on violence.)

The moralists want everything clear-cut. News and Current Affairs, with their strict guidelines, scored well. How

much easier to make rules on how much blood, how many bodies, how much detail in the Rosemary West case. Though Martin Bell has been saying that he thinks television over-sanitises the horror of war, with all that banging of the guns and, unrealistically no one apparently blown to bits as a result. So even here there is some doubt.

But when it comes to drama and humour, the sands shift so fast beneath the feet. With heavy heart I heard one governor announce that the seminar showed the clear need for more guidelines to cover these grey areas. Heaven help the luckless teams of taste-formers who will sit on those committees. Canute-like, the BBC can try to defy the cultural waves of Tarantino or Stone, the Playboy channel and worse that flow in from elsewhere with every tide. It can trim the worst blood and sex off Hollywood movies, but it cannot command the global culture of the ether.

The moralists will shake their heads and say, there you go again – this moral relativism takes us down the path to perdition. They see a steady decline in standards that can only lead to the sewer, though they never say where they would have stopped the clock. If they mean the golden year of 1952, year of coronation and conquest of Everest, perhaps we should show a night of programmes from that cultural desert of an era.

The moral panic model of society is a slippery slope to the cesspit. But another model is a continuous line of change with some higher standards and some grosser vulgarisations. To be sure, *Blind Date* has become pornographic, *Don't Give Up the Day Job* is a humiliation too far, and *Lady Chatterley* was plain bad. But there is now little of the casually sexist, racist, homophobic beastliness of yesteryear, and the drama is unrecognisably more subtle and sophisticated.

Of course, the BBC tries to wriggle out of its unwelcome role as the nation's moral guardian and weather-vane. Sidestepping the trap of whether it is an opinion-former or opinion-follower, instead they talk of the fragmenting audience and the duty to give every licence-payer something indispensable. Gone are the days when a nation sat down together to watch the same things at the same time. In other words, if you don't like the rude bits, make a cup of tea and watch the other side until the wildlife comes on.

However, forced to play the moral arbiter of our times, the BBC is doomed forever to abuse from every side, damned sometimes for cultural or political cowardice and damned sometimes when it is brave. Lame and tame, some say, while the *Telegraph* lams into its dashing scoop of the year – the Diana interview on Monday's *Panorama*. The nation's Auntie is also the nation's Aunt Sally, since pleasing all the punters all the time is quite simply impossible.

Although losing some cultural power as channels proliferate, the BBC will always have schizophrenic obligations. Bring in the crowds, bring on the excellence, do those programmes that no one else will do and yet be popular. Please the uneducated who pay the same as the erudite, but please don't be vulgar or low.

So it is hardly surprising that whenever the BBC presents its face in public, it covers its confusion in enough high-flown nonsense to make a politician blush. Sanctimonious language will always be a BBC imperative: "Our responsibility is to ensure that all that we do is driven by a moral purpose which rests on the basic pillars of decency, rather than the shifting sands of taste." Well, humbug. The BBC sits on the same sandbank of time as the rest of us.

The sins of admission

One of the great outlets for creative writing is about to be denied to the nation's 17-year-olds and their parents.

University vice-chancellors are planning to allow sixth formers to fill out their Ucas forms after A-levels, rather than months before. In a hyperactive fortnight between August and September they will offer places based on their real, rather than predicted, A-level grades.

But since when was dealing in realities part of filling out a university application form? A Ucas form should be a heady mixture of predicted grades and imagined lives.

Children who believed they had no flair for creative writing discover untapped sources of fictional inspiration. Parents who had brought up their offspring to have regard for veracity and fair play reconciled themselves to being economical with the truth or having to keep an underwolf for the next three years.

I long for a national study by the British Psychological Society of one year's Ucas forms as it could tell us so much about 17-year-olds in Britain: little about their lives, but tons about their creative abilities. Rarely can so many people have spent so much time and effort writing about non-existent achievements, interests and nobility of character for the annual autumnal sport of pulling the wool over the eyes of what is enduringly the last bastion of innocence, naivety and gullibility remaining in Britain – university admissions officers.

May I help admissions tutors, those guileless men and women, by offering my services as translator for those enigmatic, extra-curricular phrases on the forms now pouring into their offices? I am gregarious = I have sex quite often.

I am an avid reader = I don't read.

I play the violin = my mum made me have lessons when I was 11.

I play football = ditto my dad.

The whole thing is a charade, because 17-year-olds simply don't have the breadth of interest that universities so confidently expect. They are too busy taking exams, and too busy being 17. That means listening to records, going to parties, the pub, the cinema and the shops – passive, trivial and unpolitical activities that would turn an admission officers' stomach.

Seventeen-year-olds do not join amateur dramatic societies, work in hospitals in the evenings or take the Duke of Edinburgh Award on a rainy Saturday morning. They prefer to stay in bed or have fun, and if they're not going to have fun when they're 17, then when will they?

As it happens, the only achievements that admissions

officers should take any note of are the ones they universally scorn: extra-curricular achievements in school. To gain high office there and suffer the scorn of one's peers by working, or ingratiating yourself for it, takes real character.

In that regard, I was particularly shocked to read in the Independent/Ucas guide for university applicants some advice from an admissions tutor at my alma mater, the University of Kent. Urging applicants to list out-of-school activities, he said wistfully: "We don't care if you've been a milk monitor."

Why should such world-weary cynicism horrify me? Dear reader, I was a milk monitor.

We are dying breed, those of who can dimly remember spilling that daily third of a point over which every pair of short trousers had annoyed us that morning. We few, we happy few, we banned of milk monitors. Could there have



DAVID LISTER

been a better preparation of university, nay for life?

There was early training in life skills as I used every ounce (let us stick with imperial measures in matters of the third of a pint) of my eight-year-old charm on the school secretary to get the job. The lining up of milk and distribution to an entire year group also demanded precocious leadership skills. And, what is more, the experience politicised me.

As a student a decade later, I marched on a demo from that same university which now harbours the anti-milk monitor reactionaries, to protest against the ending of school milk all together by the then education secretary one Margaret Thatcher. "No milk from an old cow" was one of the more ingenious banners I recall from that day.

So my advice to students as you fill out those forms is to be not so much economical as ludicrously extravagant with the truth. And my advice to admissions tutors is ignore the lot, everything that is except the real, genuine and hard-won achievements, the sweat, toil and grovelling that result in the magic words "perfect" or "year head" or "house vice-captain." Those denote the future high-flyer.

Scratch any Cabinet minister and you will find a former milk monitor.

Paul Gregg and Jonathan Wadsworth advise Kenneth Clarke to take a penny or two off the lowest rate

The kindest cut for everyone

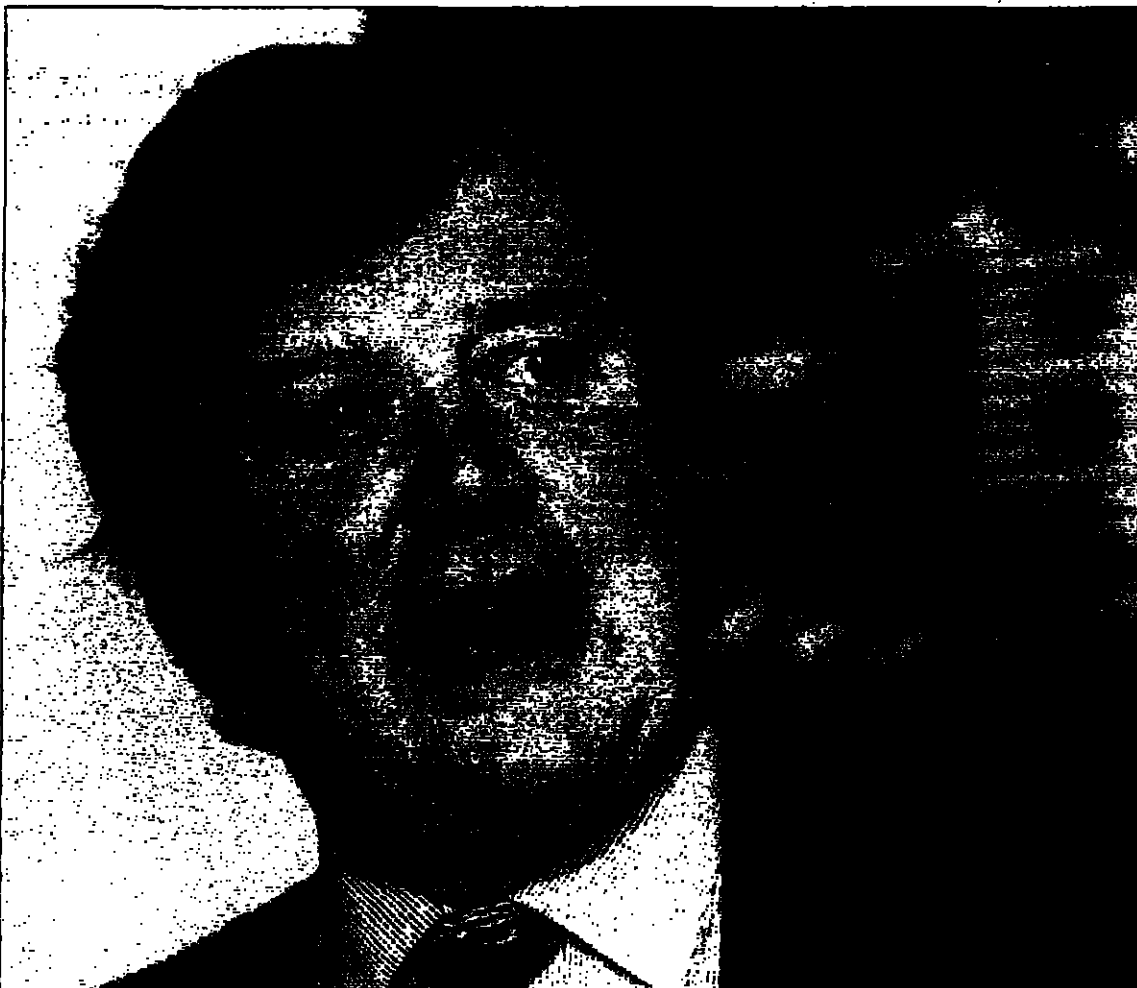
To murder an old adage, two things are certain in life: death and that Kenneth Clarke is going to cut taxes in the upcoming Budget. What we don't know is who will benefit from the tax cuts and by how much. They could be staged over several years. They could involve a penny or two off the basic rate of 25p, or even the abolition of inheritance tax. In such a highly charged political climate it is probably naive to hope that the nature of the tax cuts should fulfil any function other than picking up votes. But some kinds of tax cuts are a lot more desirable than others. And with possibly billions and billions of pounds at stake, it is worth engaging in the debate.

Increasingly people without work live in a home where no one else has a job

The real question is not tax cuts for the rich versus tax cuts for the poor; it is how you use tax cuts as a way of getting people back to work. For the growing numbers of working-age Britons who are dependent on benefits form a serious constraint on any government achieving its economic, social and tax objectives. Benefit expenditure on working-age claimants and their dependants rose from £19bn in 1978/9 to £45bn in 1994/5 – and spending has grown despite frequent attempts to scale back eligibility and reduce the real value of benefits.

So why has spending on benefits grown so fast? Part of the problem is the number of people who are out of work. But this isn't the whole story. Non-employment follows a familiar pattern, rising in recessions and falling in recoveries.

But the distribution of work has also changed. Increasingly people without work live in households where no one else has a job either – so there is no one with a wage to support the family, and everyone has to depend on benefits. The number of households with no earned income grew from 8 per cent in 1979 to 20 per cent in 1994. Even during economic recovery, the proportion of workless households



Ken Clarke: will he do the right thing?

Photograph: Reuters

has scarcely fallen. What this means is that most of the new jobs created have gone to individuals living in households where another adult is already in work.

Once families end up on benefits, they have a harder and harder time getting off again. In the past, if your whole family was out of work, you would be quicker finding a new job than someone else who had other family to depend on. Now those in workless households take twice as long to find new work as those whose partners are in work. Benefit dependence has grown not because new families are having to claim benefits, but because those on benefits already are taking much longer to get off. In 1979 the typical workless family spent 18 months

on benefit before anyone in the family found a job. By 1994, this had risen to four-and-a-half years.

The core of the problem – according to a growing body of evidence from left and right – is that work increasingly does not pay. For the family out of work for several years is hardly better off when one of their members finds a job – largely because the wages available in the kinds of jobs they are usually able to get are so very low. For these "entry jobs" are incredibly badly paid and are worth in real terms no more than they were in 1979. A third of entry jobs pay less than £4,000 a year and two-thirds less than £7,000. Virtually none of the jobs that the unemployed are able to get pay wages that the average British worker would

recognise. Combine this with a benefit system designed for a different era, and the incentives to take these jobs are minimal.

Taxes make matters worse. Astonishingly these entry jobs are still taxed, often at the introductory rate of 20p. And government policies since 1992 have not only been regressive, they have added to the problem of lousy incentives to find work. Increasing council rents, the council tax, fuel tax, increases in NI contributions and failures fully to uprate tax allowances have all reduced the gap between benefit incomes and low-paid work.

The question for Kenneth Clarke at the end of this month is whether he can use his tax cuts where he failed with his tax increases, to help

people off benefits and into work. And cutting the basic rate of 25p is not the answer. For most lowest-paid workers only pay tax at 20p; they never make it into the basic rate band. If he wants a tax cut to make a difference to his benefit figures he should look at cutting the 20p introductory rate. Not only would it reach more of the low-paid, it is also far more cost-effective than cutting the basic rate. Because the introductory band is narrow (£3,200) relative to the basic rate, you could use the same amount of money to generate a much bigger rate cut.

For the same price as 1p off the basic rate (£3bn), you could cut 5p off the introductory rate and bring it

Government policies since 1992 have added to lousy incentives to find work

down to 15p. We have a realistic possibility of achieving a 10p introductory rate after the next two Budgets.

Of course tax cuts alone aren't enough. For those on means-tested benefits such as Family Credit or Housing Benefit would lose most of this tax give-away in withdrawn benefits – unless withdrawal rates are lowered in line with the tax cuts over the £3,200 band range. Thus the marginal tax rates and the marginal benefit withdrawal rate can be cut, while take-home pay rises. This could create substantial improvements in work incentives without dragging more people into Family Credit.

Tax cuts are no panacea to end the growth of benefit dependence. However, combined with other initiatives currently being tried out by Peter Lilley at the DSS maybe, just maybe, Britain can get more for its tax cuts than a feel-good factor in the opinion polls. So, Ken, if you are going to cut taxes, do the right thing – cut the 20p rate, give tax cuts to everyone and help prise open the unemployment trap.

Paul Gregg and Jonathan Wadsworth are researchers at the Centre of Economic Performance at the London School of Economics.

Generation Why



by Tony Reeve and Steve Way

PLEASE HELP A LITTLE DONKEY IN DISTRESS



This is Barney, looking happy now after being rescued! Her feet had grown so long she was unwilling to walk and found it painful even to stand – her owner was convicted of failing to look after her properly.

Although we have rescued over 6,700 donkeys, there are still many donkeys in trouble who need our help. Please try to spare a little this Christmas to help us in our immense task of giving all our residents the food, love, care and attention they need.

Be Father Christmas to a donkey this year and help a donkey in distress!

Our administration costs amount to just under 6p in the £1, so any help you can give will provide direct help to the donkeys.

PLEASE HELP US TO HELP THEM

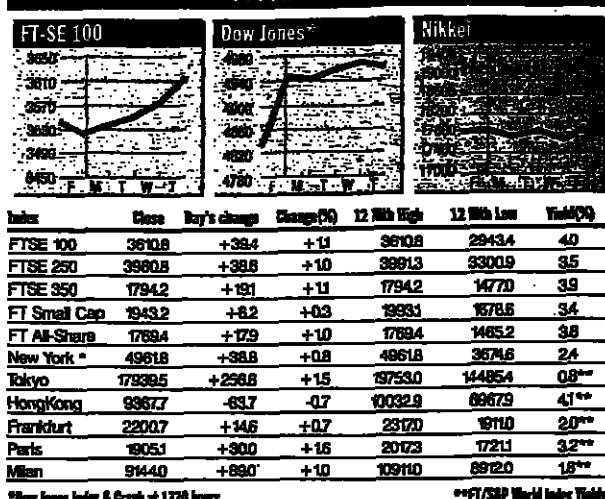
Please send donations to:
The Donkey Sanctuary, (Dept ETT) 1,
Sidmouth, Devon, EX10 0NU
Tel: (01395) 578222
Enquiries to Dr E. D. Svendsen, M.B.E.



I enclose Cheque/Postal Order for £
Name: Mr/Mrs/Miss
Address
Post Code

MARKET SUMMARY

STOCK MARKETS



MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Rises					Falls				
Price (p)	Change (p)	% Change	Price (p)	% Change	Price (p)	Change (p)	% Change	Price (p)	% Change
Mirror Group	150	13	7.8	Telegraph House	22.5	1	4.3		
Cowie Group	222	16	6.8	Inchcape	295	11	3.6		
UOL News	570	31	5.8	Reem	385	14	3.5		
Bartford	167	9	5.7	Low & Bonar	485	13	2.5		
Costa Vivina	191	10	5.5	Smith (WH)	403	8	1.9		

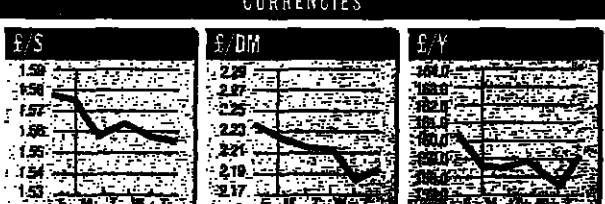
INTEREST RATES



Money Market Rates

Rate	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	5 Year
UK	6.69	6.56	7.80	6.59	7.39	8.80	
US	5.75	5.59	5.99	6.02	6.29	8.14	
Japan	0.35	0.34	2.72	4.75			
Germany	3.91	3.98	8.20	7.54	7.08		

CURRENCIES



Other Indicators

Indicator	Value	Change	% Change	Year Ago
Oil Brent \$	16.75	+0.09	+0.5	16.86
Gold \$	385.00	-0.50	-0.1	386.40
Gold £	266.72	-0.08	-0.03	265.73
Base Rates				
6 Mth				6.75%
12 Mth				6.50%

IN BRIEF

BCCI creditors in line for \$1.8bn payout
Over 250,000 creditors of the collapsed Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) are set to share \$1.8bn of compensation if a Luxembourg court ruling on the payout plan yesterday is confirmed in December. Four former employees of BCCI withdrew their appeal against the proposed settlement for creditors yesterday and agreed to pay costs.

Further slide in Euro Disney shares
Euro Disney shares plunged a further 25p to 169p yesterday in the wake of the previous day's announcement of disappointing annual results. They were trading at 215p prior to the results, and have slumped by almost 70 per cent in the last two years. Some analysts believe that the share price could fall considerably further.

PowerGen signs £450m leasing deal
PowerGen has signed a £450m deal for the long term lease of two large power stations to Eastern Electricity, now owned by Hanson. The sale - under pressure from the regulator, Ofwat - will reduce PowerGen's earnings per share by up to 3 pence per year. The agreement comes as PowerGen awaits the Government's decision on whether to refer its £1.95bn bid for Midlands Electricity to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Northwest Airlines fears hostile KLM bid
Northwest Airlines last night moved to protect itself from a hostile takeover by minority shareholder KLM Royal Dutch Airlines. As tensions between the two airlines grows, the Northwest board adopted a plan to stop any "coercive or unfair" takeover tactics. KLM, whose three board members voted against the plan, would now be forced to negotiate with Northwest's 11 other directors about a takeover. The US airline became suspicious when KLM assembled a war chest of more than \$3bn.

Persil chief named Unilever chairman
Niall FitzGerald is expected to earn in excess of £800,000 a year when he takes over as chairman of Unilever, the foods and detergents group, next year. Mr FitzGerald, 50, will succeed Sir Michael Perry who is retiring next August after 39 years with the group. Sir Michael was paid £819,000 last year, including a £152,000 performance related bonus. Mr FitzGerald is currently the head of Unilever's detergents division which was responsible for the Persil Power debacle. Unilever was forced to withdraw the detergent after tests proved it damaged clothes.

Welsh Water in electricity merger talks
South Wales Electricity is braced today for a meeting with Welsh Water, almost 10 days after the company said it might bid for Swansea. The electricity firm said yesterday that it estimates the annual savings from a merger to be little more than £11m and that they would cost £11.6m to achieve. Swansea said it is willing to listen, but added: "We do not see how this could enhance shareholder value."

KKR to buy Reed Elsevier titles
K-I Communications Corporation, a subsidiary of Kohlberg Kravis and Roberts, said it reached a definitive agreement to buy 20 magazines published by Reed Elsevier. Terms of the transaction were not disclosed.

Inflation plunge lifts rate hopes

PAUL WALLACE
and DIANE COYLE

Hopes for an early cut in interest rates to accompany a tax-cutting Budget intensified after headline inflation plummeted and the Government's borrowing position improved for the first time this financial year.

"The chances of a cut in December in the wake of the Budget are rising sharply," Roger Bootle, chief economist at HSBC Markets, said.

This was a view shared in the markets, where the short sterling future contract used to speculate on interest rate changes ended the day implying a cut in rates from their current level of 6.75 to 6.55 per cent. Gilt rallied sharply, too, with the December contract rising by almost a point.

But sterling barely came off the all-time low of \$2.6 it reached on Wednesday against a basket of currencies, closing at \$2.7 on the trade-weighted exchange rate.

Bill Martin, chief economist at UBS, warned that "the gain in inflation could be offset by the weakness in the exchange rate, which must be causing concern in official circles, if not in the Chancellor's mind". He also warned that inflation could rebound in the months ahead.

Headline inflation dropped from 3.9 to 3.2 per cent in October, its lowest for almost a year. The underlying rate of inflation targeted by the Government - which excludes mortgage interest payments - also fell unexpectedly, from 3.1 to 2.9 per cent. Describing the figures as very encouraging, the Treasury said they showed that domestic inflationary pressures remained subdued.

The dramatic fall in the headline rate, the biggest since January 1993, was the result of the sharpest monthly fall in retail prices for any October for 50 years. A reduction in inflation had been widely expected as the effects of the building societies' recent cut in mortgage rates fed through to the index and the impact of last year's rise



Budget fillip: Kenneth Clarke holds all the cards for tax cuts that won't scare markets

in interest rates dropped out. However, the size of the fall came as a shock to the City.

So, too, did the decline in the underlying rate, which the markets had been expecting to rise to 3.3 per cent.

Altogether, the net effect of the changes in mortgage rates this year and last contributed two-thirds to the decline in the annual rate of headline inflation. Keen competition in the insurance market - buildings, contents and motor - contributed about a fifth to the fall. Seasonal food prices, which fell sharply in October, were the other main factor driving the annual rate down.

There was clear evidence that retailers, who pushed through margin increases in August and September, had been forced by consumer resistance to cut prices again. Clothing and footwear, which had risen 3.9 per cent in September, dropped back by 0.2 per cent. Household goods, up 1 per cent last month, also dropped marginally.

The immediate outlook for headline inflation remains affected by that ultimate seasonal factor, the Budget. Last year's had the effect of increasing prices by almost 1 per cent. Ahead of the Budget, the Chancellor received a welcome fillip when it emerged that the Government repaid £1.3bn of its debt last month, a surprise after months of higher-than-expected borrowing.

A surge in corporation tax receipts due to higher company profits explained the unexpected improvement in the public finances. David Miles, UK economist at Merrill Lynch, said: "It is a good time of year to come up with impressive figures like this."

City analysts said the favourable news on the public finances would make tax cuts expected in the Budget more acceptable to the markets. However, most still expect this year's PSBR to exceed the £23.6bn forecast by the Treasury in the summer by £3-£5bn. Sean Shepley, an economist at CS First Boston, said: "The

Chancellor will still need to persuade people that tax cuts will be sustainable, and he can balance the budget over a reasonable length of time."

The repayment took the public sector borrowing requirement so far this financial year to £18.8bn, compared with £19.6bn during the same period last year. Excluding privatisation proceeds, which have been negligible this year, the underlying borrowing requirement has improved by £4.5bn to £18.9bn.

Corporation tax revenues, which vary widely from month to month, reached a record £7.3bn last month. So far this financial year they have been 25 per cent higher than last year - less than the 35 per cent improvement pencilled in by the Treasury. Other tax receipts are also falling short of the Chancellor's targets, mainly because inflation has been lower than expected.

Spending has been successfully contained on the other hand. Departmental spending has risen 3 per cent this year, in line with plans. There have been steeper rises in debt interest payments.

"It's awesome," said Ralph Acampora, director of technical research at Prudential Securities. "The rally is broad based and includes most of the Dow stocks, regardless of industry, and it's dragging the other indices up."

"This is quality blue-chip leadership and you can't beat that." The Dow could hit 5,000 "maybe tomorrow," he added.

Shares in UK and US bound to record highs

MAGNUS GRIMOND

Hopes of further interest rate cuts spurred shares to record highs on both sides of the Atlantic yesterday. News of a fall in UK inflation in October combined with renewed signs of weakness in the US economy to send stock markets soaring.

The FTSE 100 in London closed 39.4 points higher at 3,610.8, while the Dow Jones index was 33.6 points ahead at 4,981.8 by mid-morning in New York, putting it on target to break through the psychologically important 5,000 barrier.

The previous all-time high in London was set on 18 October, when the Footsie hit 3,598 at one stage and closed at a record 3,593. Commenting on the latest surge, one senior trader said: "Interest rate hopes are keeping people investing and

pushing the market." CSFB analyst Philip Tyson forecast that the latest inflation data shifted the probability in favour of "a 50-basis point cut before or around the end of the year."

Gilts received an additional boost from news that the Government's finances are at last starting to improve after several disappointing months of public sector borrowing.

On Wall Street, the Dow, which started the year at 3,833.48, has been setting new highs for most of November. The catalyst for yesterday's jump in shares was weaker-than-expected figures from the Philadelphia Federal Reserve Bank. The Philadelphia Fed, one of the regional offshoots of the US central bank, said its business outlook diffusion index fell sharply to 7.9 in November from 25.5 in October, while its

prices paid index dropped to 12.3 from 30.3. Following on from Wednesday's announcement of a fall in US output, the report fuelled renewed speculation that the Fed may cut interest rates again before the end of the year if the budget dispute in Washington is resolved. The hopes pushed long bonds up over 1-7/8 to yield 6.22 per cent, with shares following in their wake.

"The status of these funds followed the initial injection of capital into with-profits operations by shareholders, allowing bonuses to be paid out even in early years of those funds."

But David Prosser, group chief executive at L&G, said the bonus was not an orphan fund, and its pay-out simply followed a re-calculation of its value. Ownership of the surplus has always been known. He also denied the pay-out was part of L&G's defence against rumoured takeover plans.

Shares in the company rose 22p to 667p on the announcement.

L&G pays out £160m bonus

NIC CICUTTI

Legal & General, one of the UK's top life insurers, yesterday announced it is to pay a £160m special bonus to its 1.4 million with-profits policyholders.

The one-off payment, worth about 30 per cent of the annual bonus normally paid to policyholders, follows a study of L&G's long-term fund which had with-profits assets of £13.2bn at the end of 1994. Even after paying the special bonus and meeting all guaranteed benefits and expected future bonuses there was an excess of up to £1.5bn in the fund.

L&G plans to continue to use most of this money as working capital for with-profits business. It also aims to change the rules to prevent future cross-funding for the with-profits part of the fund from other areas, including unit-linked policies, term assurance and annuities.

The pay-out to policyholders will add about £900 to a 25-year policy maturing in December, where a £30-a-month premium would already have led to a pay-out worth about £61,400.

Shareholders will gain by an underpinning of the amount payable to them. They are expected to receive an additional £18m this year as their share of the bonus pay-out, with their interest in the fund growing by about £150m overall.

The company added that the change in rules, together with the increase in shareholders' interest, meant that it would be able to maintain a market-beating dividend policy.

The pay-out follows similar distributions from other insurers' "orphan funds", where both policyholders and shareholders have received pay-outs after the exact ownership of funds held by each company had been broken down.

Lloyd's changeover: New chief executive sets out to quell fears in the market

Middleton's pay 'may hit £10m'

JOHN EISENHAMMER
Financial Editor

Peter Middleton, who resigned abruptly from Lloyd's of London on Wednesday, could receive a pay package of up to £10m for the first three years as chief executive for UK and Europe with Salomon Brothers, the US investment bank.

In his first year he will be paid £1.8m, and this is sure to rise over the length of his contract. Banking sources say he will earn a minimum of £5m, which could rise with bonuses to £10m.

His first year's package will be more than five times what he earned as chief executive at Lloyd's. Salomon refused to comment.

But Mr Sandler said a top priority was to establish a closer relationship with names' leaders, who saw Mr Middleton as their most sympathetic ally in Lloyd's management in the complex settlement negotiations. "I recognise the importance of moving in Peter's footsteps and building those relationships. But the gap is not as big as some make out," he said.

Mr Sandler's appointment met a broadly positive reception yesterday among leading names representatives, and a realistic appreciation of why Mr Middleton, whose relations with the Lloyd's establishment have been far from easy, had chosen to leave.

"Middleton was a very good hired gun, and he got hired elsewhere at a higher price," said Damon de Laszlo, a names leader. "But Ron Sandler is an excellent replacement, one of the architects of the reconstruction plan."

Michael Deeny, another names action group leader, said the changeover at the top of Lloyd's might protect the negotiations. "But ultimately this is not about personalities. We have lost billions of pounds. If Lloyd's gives us enough money, we shall settle. Who writes the cheques is less important."

One of the most urgent tasks of the moment, Mr Sandler said, was trying to raise more money for the overall settlement with names.

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Still the same questions to be answered at C&W

COMMENT

'It is easy to see why BT might be interested in Cable & Wireless ... but there are enormous obstacles to overcome if such a marriage is to be consummated'

Lord Young of Graffham has been so closely associated with Cable & Wireless's refusal to address the issue of its stock market undervaluation that his retirement has been seen as a panacea. Plainly it is not, however, for even though there is now a set date for his departure, the viability of the global telecommunications federation is as unclear as ever.

For a company that remains wedded to the idea of a global network of companies, C&W's eagerness to spell out the economic benefits of the federation yesterday smacked of defensiveness; it would not have looked out of place in a takeover bid defence document. The figures do, however, put the debate on to a more scientific footing, even if outsiders can only take the company's word for the claimed £90m a year boost to annual profits from better buying terms and shared product and service development.

If the figures can be believed, they are not inconsequential in the context of a company expected to make profits this year of about £1.3bn. But they hardly represent a stumbling block to a takeover of the company by a global telecoms player such as BT or AT&T with even greater access to the claimed economies of scale.

It is easy to see why BT might be interested in C&W. It is keen to establish a presence in the Far East for its "concert" business, telephony operation, Hongkong Telecom, mainly owned by C&W, would be an excellent launching pad. But there are enormous obstacles to overcome if such a

marriage is to be consummated, with regulators at home and the Chinese government to be satisfied along the way. Furthermore, a change of ownership would certainly be used by the Hong Kong authorities as a way of screwing down the relatively generous regulatory regime the company presently operates under.

Even so, there is a treasure trove of hidden value in C&W still waiting to be unlocked, and a sum-of-parts valuation can quite conservatively put a price of 600p a share on the company compared with the current 425p. Furthermore, the strategy conundrum remains as problematic as ever, with the company pulling in two different directions – the monopoly supplier in Hong Kong and other far-flung territories, and the upstart attacking the monopoly in Britain. Lord Young or no Lord Young, investors will ask the same question. When will all that value be reflected in the share price?

A watershed for national papers

Rupert Murdoch has a simple view of the future as far as British national newspapers are concerned. He believes that one day there will be only five daily titles left. It scarcely needs saying that the Murdoch crystal ball foresees that at least two of the survivors will be his. Last night he went some way to making the prophecy come true by

announcing the closure of one of News International's five titles. Today.

It seems unlikely this will prove the fuse that ignites the wholesale rationalisation of British newspapers Mr Murdoch foresees (the easing of competitive pressures implied by a rise in the cover price of the *Times* would indicate the contrary), but there is no doubt that this is a watershed of sorts. Add to the closure the present fevered level of speculation over the Express titles, rumoured meetings between Mr Murdoch and Lord Rothermere of Associated, and there is quite enough to think that something seismic is in the offing.

Closing *Today* could hardly have been a difficult commercial decision to make. Harder to explain is why News bought the title from its then owner, Tiny Rowland, in the first place, or why it was prepared to tolerate accumulated losses of an astonishing £140m for as long as it did. The clear bet is that at least some of *Today's* 500,000 readers will move to other News International titles, particularly the *Times*. That view reflects Mr Murdoch's belief that newspapers are like any other commodity – price-sensitive and driven by the usual market forces of under- and over-capacity.

The circulation gains made by the *Times* since the price war began lend some support to that view. Far from proving the point that there is too much capacity in the market, however, the only effect so far of the cover price war has been to plunge large parts of

the industry, including the *Times*, into losses which, in the long term, look as unsustainable as those of *Today*.

No need to panic about Ford's offer

Has Ford set a new pay benchmark with its inflation-beating offer to UK employees? Ford regards its job as to set pay levels appropriate to its own operations and local conditions; it doesn't care a fig for what ministers think. There have been tremendous strides in productivity at Ford's UK plants, which are not far behind those in Germany. The pay offer is not a charitable reward for effort but a self-interested move to forestall unrest on production lines that have been pushed hard in recent years.

Time was when the annual Ford settlement was the bellwether for the pay round. The fact that unions have turned down 4.75 per cent has understandably sent shivers down the spines of those with long memories. If Ford's offer were to be copied across the country, the surprise fall in retail price inflation to 3.2 per cent in October announced yesterday would turn out to be a blip. In reality, however, the Ford settlement is more likely to show that the going rate has all but gone as a concept, losing much of its punch in today's flexible labour market. The latest earnings figures show a very sharp divergence between manufacturing and services.

Underlying earnings in manufacturing rose by 4.25 per cent in August and September, but by only 2.5 per cent in services. There is marked divergence within these sectors, too. In manufacturing, annual earnings growth till September was as low as 2.5 per cent in textiles, but 4.4 per cent in the car industry. In services, earnings growth was 1.3 per cent in hotels and restaurants but has been rising at 4.5 per cent in the wholesale trade.

Much more important than the "going rate" for pay increases is the rate of inflation itself. Pay settlements have all risen in the course of the year, as negotiators seek to ensure that wages do not fall behind inflation. The new and startling fall in retail price inflation could reverse the trend, if sustained.

The divergence of settlements between industries suggests that successful companies operating across national boundaries will pay better than purely domestic companies operating in Britain's deregulated labour market, where collective bargaining has faded away.

At Ford, there is only the loosest of linkages between pay settlements in the various European centres. But any company operating throughout the Continent is accustomed to dealing in an adult way with works councils and centralised pay bargaining, and like Ford will be prepared to cut a generous deal with unions when it suits. The difference now is that the rest of industry no longer has to panic when that happens.

Departure date for Lord Young fuels bid rumours

TOM STEVENSON
Deputy City Editor

Lord Young put a date on his retirement from Cable & Wireless yesterday "to end the recent ill-informed and destabilising comment, and to put the record straight". His departure immediately re-ignited speculation that BT would launch a bid for the company, to establish a presence in the Far East and realise what many observers see as C&W's hidden value.

Lord Young will leave a company still struggling to convince the City of the merits of its global telecommunications federation, but determined to press ahead with its strategy. Chairman of C&W since 1993, he will quit in February 1997. He said yesterday he had decided to put an end to speculation about his future following a spate of newspaper articles suggesting he was under pressure from institutions to quit, and alleging a rift with the company's other directors. Denying any disagreement, Lord Young said it had always been his intention to quit on his 65th birthday.

Cable & Wireless has long struggled to convince investors of the value of its federation of telecoms companies around the world, with Lord Young most closely associated with the company's failure to present its case properly and its refusal to change its strategy to realise its value to shareholders.

At times the stock market value of C&W has been barely more than the market capitalisation of the company's 57 per cent shareholding in Hongkong Telecom, its most valuable asset, although the valuation gap has narrowed sharply in recent months.

Lord Young said he would have no say in the selection of his replacement, but expected it to be an external appoint-

ment, probably another former politician with the skills to carry on his ambassadorial role around the world, especially in the fast-growing telecommunications markets of Asia.

Lord Young announced his planned departure alongside a 9 per cent rise in pre-tax profits for the six months to September. He warned that growth in demand for fixed-wire services had slowed in line with lower economic activity in some of C&W's markets, but said Mercury was back on track and pointed to sharply lower losses from start-up associate companies.

After a 7 per cent rise in turnover to £2.71bn, operating profits rose by a similar amount to £636m. Reported pre-tax profits of £815m included a £199m exceptional profit from the sale of C&W's 5 per cent stake in Mannesmann Mobilfunk, a German mobile phone company. Underlying profits of £616m compared with £567m.

The company responded to persistent criticism of its federation of telecoms companies around the world by spelling out for the first time the economic value of the network. Better management of telephone traffic, sharper procurement terms and shared product and service development were worth £40m in first-half pre-tax profits, C&W said, and would add £90m to the bottom line in the full year to next March.

In the six months to September, Mercury lifted operating profits from £96m to £103m and claimed 15 per cent growth in residential lines compared with the small decline announced last week by BT and twice BT's rate of growth in domestic and international call volumes.

Following a 25 per cent reduction in staff numbers over the past year, Mercury said it had reduced its on-going cost base by £60m.

Profile, page 25

Rail privatisation: Outsiders emerge as clear favourites but still face pitfalls in franchise battle



Resurgence: planning to revive the traditions of 'God's Wonderful Railway'

GWR bidder unveils plan for extra trains

CHRISTIAN WOLMAR
Transport Correspondent

Resurgence Railways, the new rail company that is set to win the franchise to run InterCity services out of Paddington, is planning to increase the number of trains in an effort to win passengers back to rail.

The emergence of Resurgence as the favourite to take over the Great Western Railway is the surprise of the first group of three franchises which are due to be allocated next month. The company is led by a group of managers including former Trafalgar House finance director John Ansell. Resurgence is the preferred bidder – having beaten off a management buy-out team – and has until the end of next week to submit the final terms of its bid.

Mr Ansell shared a £1.3bn pay-off with two colleagues

when they left Trafalgar nearly two years ago, and he has teamed up with Mike Jones, a former BR area manager at Leeds, and Richard Morris, safety director of Eurotunnel. Mr Jones, the vice-chairman, is known in rail circles as an experienced manager who was highly critical of the high freight prices charged by BR when he was in charge of petroleum movements on rail.

Resurgence is thought to require more subsidy – currently BR requires £51m for the service – than the rival bid but has put forward a series of innovations that attracted the support of the franchising director, Roger Salmon. It wants to run more trains from distant parts of the network in Wales and the West directly into London by splitting up the existing eight-coach InterCity 125 high-speed trains into two.

The company also wants to re-establish direct services to London on routes that currently require a change to reach the capital. One insider said: "The MBO team were offering nothing new, and Resurgence came along with an exciting new package, adding to what is already a very good service."

Nevertheless, the bid faces several pitfalls. Adding trains beyond the number required by Mr Salmon means that the track access charges from Railtrack will increase.

There are also additional costs in splitting the high-speed trains because they will need a new trailer at the rear. But the team is confident that with fares being restricted to the rate of inflation and less under the new financial regime imposed by the Government, extra passengers will be won back to the railways.

IN BRIEF

Keebler frozen foods sale

United Biscuits is selling its Keebler frozen foods business to Windsor Corporation, a US foods group, for £54.8m, a week after selling Keebler's cookies and cracker business for £316m. United has now raised \$580m from the sale of Keebler's division, with only the loss-making salty snacks (crisps) business still to be sold. The division recorded a £13.6m loss on sales of £76m last year.

Cortworth flotation to raise £25m

Engineering group Cortworth will have a market value of £71.6m when it joins the stock market next month. The company is raising £25.7m from the flotation, which is priced at 150p per share. The funds will be used for expansion and acquisition. Cortworth was formed two years ago as a management buy-out from Williams Holdings, the industrial conglomerate. After the float, Williams will have a 19.99 per cent stake in the company.

Cadbury sells ITnet

Cadbury Schweppes has sold its ITnet information technology division to a management buy-out for £32.5m. Cadbury will retain a 12.5 per cent stake in the business.

Yates' shares hit a peak

The share price of Yates Brothers Wine Lodges climbed 5p to a fresh peak of 291p on yesterday's interim results, showing a 19 per cent rise in sales to £29.2m, and a 50 per cent surge in taxable profits to £3.2m. The share price is more than double last year's flotation price of 140p. Yates has 55 outlets, and wants to have 100 outlets by the turn of the millennium. The interim dividend is 1.2p. Analysts forecast that annual profits will climb from £5.1m to £6.6m.

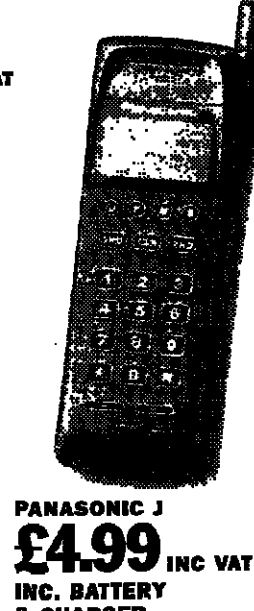
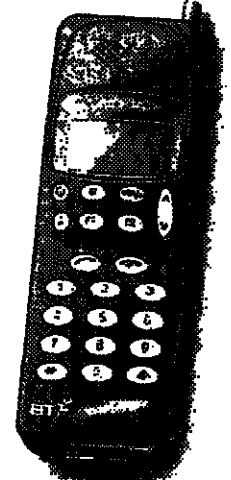
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Alarm at Boeing merger talks

RUSSELL HOTTEN

Europe's aircraft industry is on alert after reports that America's Boeing and McDonnell Douglas are in merger talks that would create the world's largest aerospace group and force thousands of job losses.

A merger, combining Boeing's dominance of commercial aircraft with MD's military expertise, would spark a fresh round of consolidation among Europe's struggling aerospace companies.

Attempts to create a single US aircraft maker would face anti-trust hurdles and intense political opposition in Washington, and analysts believe an asset swap is more likely than a full-blown merger. But European aerospace companies said that rationalisation of the two US giants would put pressure on them to follow suit.

Airbus, in which British Aerospace is a partner, said a deal would intensify global competition and underline the need for further cost savings at Europe's aerospace companies.

The four Airbus partners are talking about how the group can be restructured from a collaborative partnership to an integrated corporation. A spokesman said a merger of Boeing and MD would give a new urgency to the talks.

A spokesman for Matra Défense, the French company that wants to merge its missiles business with BAe, said: "We need more concentration and more mergers in Europe to be



Frank Shrontz: sights set on McDonnell Douglas

able to counter such measures in the US. If we do not do that, our defence industries will disappear."

Neither Boeing nor McDonnell Douglas would comment yesterday on reports in the *Wall Street Journal* that the companies were negotiating a deal, which would create a combined company worth \$35bn with a 70 per cent global market share.

Boeing, headed by Frank Shrontz, is the world's largest commercial aircraft company, but like its rivals has struggled as airlines delayed orders during the recession. MD's smaller commercial division has teetered on the edge of collapse for many years and the company has been sustained by its military aircraft sales.

Nick Cunningham, analyst at BZW, believes anti-trust problems may prevent a merger of the civil businesses, though not the military operations. "I guess it is a matter of what the Department of Defense thinks," he said. "I'm sure they're talking to each other, as everybody is, because there's

clearly further rationalisation to go in the US defence industry as there is in Europe."

The Pentagon has traditionally encouraged its military suppliers to merge, and gave its blessing to last year's \$10bn deal which brought together Lockheed and Martin Marietta. Lockheed Martin has already cut thousands of jobs.

Airbus has been gaining market share on Boeing for several years, and last year overtook its rival. But this week's news that the US company had won a huge order from Singapore Airlines came as a blow.

Both Airbus and Boeing have forecast that airlines will need to order 13,000 to 15,000 new aircraft worth over \$1,000bn in the next 20 years to replace ageing fleets.

Last year Airbus won firm orders for 125 new aircraft worth \$9.1bn while Boeing announced sales of 120 worth \$7.7bn. In contrast Boeing has already announced sales this year of over 300 aircraft, including the Singapore deal, while Airbus has just \$2 orders.

Lord Young, who has announced he is to quit the telecoms giant, will leave an air of lost opportunity at its Mercury offshoot. Paul Valley reports

Five years of crossed lines at Cable & Wireless

In my wallet I carry two symbols of corporate failure. They are my Mercury phonecards - £10 and £2 respectively. Mr Cholmondeley-Warner, Harry Enfield's moustachioed cartoon icon of post-war propriety, would be impressed. No one else would be. I carry them like talismans. They seem to work. For less and less do I encounter those strange blue creatures that pass for Mercury pay phones.

So whatever happened to Mercury? Eleven years ago the company was apparently given a licence to print money when it was granted exclusive rights to challenge the monopoly of British Telecom. Yet in the decade that has passed it seems hardly to have dented the market. Last year it was forced to announce it is gradually to shut down the call boxes, lay off 2,500 staff and restructure the business at a cost of £122m. Then last week the man responsible for the new strategy, Duncan Lewis, abruptly resigned himself, with no job to go to.

Mercury is now on to its fifth chief executive in six years. So it is an impossible job, or is it? As chairman, Lord Young of Graffham - Margaret Thatcher's one-time favourite minister - just impossible to work with? Things were looking good for Mercury in 1990, when Lord Young took over as chairman of its parent company, Cable & Wireless. Not long before, as Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, he had awarded a mobile telephony licence to Mercury. His appointment seemed to make sense for C&W, the telecoms giant that was once the communications system of empire and which spans 50 countries.

Lord Young went with a can-do reputation. "Everyone else brings me problems, David

brings me solutions," Mrs Thatcher memorably said of the man she brought unelected into the Cabinet, ennobling him for the purpose, after being impressed with his performance as head of the Manpower Services Commission.

But not everyone was pleased. Gordon Owen, the chief executive, had hoped for the top job himself. Mr Owen, a capable old C&W hand who was autocratic, energetic and obstinate, began a power struggle that lasted 10 months. "He made no effort to work with the new chairman," one insider said. "The end was inevitable."

One day a friend walked into Mr Owen's office and announced that a headhunter had offered him Mr Owen's job. After 37 years at C&W he went to receive his dismissal with the words: "Right, you've taken my whole life, what's the deal?" The deal was almost £1m and this week, with Mercury in chaos, Mr Owen was maintaining a satisfied silence; he is chairman of the National Grid's telecom outfit, Energis, which is using electricity pylons to support fibre-optic wires to become the third big player in a rapidly expanding telecom market that now has almost 60 firms holding licences.

With Mr Owen gone, Lord Young became an executive chairman. He was hands-on about new business development and as an international

front-man but also "dabbling and dipping in and out elsewhere," in the words of one former senior C&W executive, "in a manner which people working for him find difficult". It was a pattern familiar to senior civil servants at the DTI who, in an unpublished survey, showed they didn't like him. Difficult, abrasive, bullying, shallow, slightly flashy, PR-driven were among the verdicts. Lord Young was shrinking their department but many outsiders shared the view. "Slick and strangely lack-

found one in James Ross, who came from BP as C&W chief executive - "a calm, straight guy who works for consensus," colleagues said. But he has found no one to stay at Mercury.

His first chief executive there, Peter van Cuylenburg, decided that as BT got its act together Mercury was going to need a more specific strategy to compete. "It couldn't be a mini-BT across the board," one former C&W executive said. The man inevitably known as PVC immersed the company in a com-

man for the company," a Young loyalist said. "but he appeared to be less effective on the admin and finance side. His budget caused a crisis of confidence." Mr Harris was moved sideways last year after disappointing results - profits went down by 17 per cent.

In came Duncan Lewis, an ex-BT man "very calm, assured, thinking everything through, putting in place a strategy," said one C&W old hand. The strategy was to wield the axe on payphones, jobs and an awful lot else and concentrate on corporate customers who prefer to deal with one telecom outfit for all their needs. Nine months on, the City began to talk about how he had "turned the company round with some hard decisions". Now, out of the blue, Mr Lewis goes too, to be replaced by Peter Howell-Davies, Cable & Wireless man and boy.

So is it an impossible job? Some analysts say yes. BT was left too dominant, they argue, pointing to its huge powers of information and the breadth of its customer base. And BT was allowed to depress prices where Mercury competed and raise them where it had a monopoly - something Mr Lewis was complaining about in an impassioned City speech the day before his summary resignation.

But other analysts believe that Mercury has just loused up - under-estimating BT's economies of scale, over-esti-

Is chief executive of Mercury an impossible job, or is Lord Young just impossible to work with?

ing in presence," one said. "He may be the man with solutions, but they don't last," another said. "He has a short attention span," is the judgement of one who has worked closely with him. "He has big ideas but doesn't have the concentration to carry them through."

"It was reasonable enough to change Owen," says James Dodd, telecom analyst with Kleinwort Benson. "He and Lord Sharp, the former chairman, had done a good job but something new was needed to take the company into a new era. You wanted a blue-chip corporate manager." Lord Young

plete strategic rethink, and after just a year PVC went back to the States.

He was replaced by Mike Harris from First Direct, the bank that had made the most successful current application of modern telephony. "Young wanted someone to market Mercury aggressively," one insider said. Mr Harris was good at that but knew it was not enough. He too introduced a strategic rethink along the lines of "imagine what the company should be like in five years and imagine how we get from here to there". But costs began to rise. "Mike was good front-

making its own return on investment and making a number of key errors. They point to its precipitate move to a coinless market in payphones and its policy of free off-peak calls in its mobile phone system. "Free calls in the evening," one analyst said, "secured them quick penetration of the market but people bought phones and only used them for free in the evening."

In the City people asked if the 63-year-old Lord Young was worth his total remuneration package of almost £1m a year. "Mercury was one of the most spectacular investments of the Eighties under Lord Sharp," says James Dodd at Kleinwort Benson. "But it has underperformed dramatically for the past two years. It doesn't reflect well on Lord Young. In the end, a chairman only has one job - to appoint a successful team - that's the only thing he has to do."

Much will turn on the outcome of Mercury's recent £825m investment in the German telecom company Vebacom. "It is an enormous gamble when the political and regulatory structure of the German market is undecided," another analyst said. "Mercury has gone critical." It is not the only strategic decision to be made. One of Duncan Lewis's concerns was that C&W - on whose main board he was offered a place just before he left - is currently trying to do too much. A "federation" is how Lord Young likes to describe it: a "hotchpotch" is Mr Lewis's view.

"There is no doubt that C&W is a house divided," one international analyst said. "It is a schizophrenic organisation - a monopoly operator in many countries and yet the market entrant in others."



Big ideas, but ... Lord Young came with a 'can-do' reputation, though his hands-on approach grated on some

Brutal push that could discredit private finance for public projects

If there was one really serious grumble about the Government at the CBI conference this week it was the failure of the Private Finance Initiative to deliver the grand promises made for it by ministers.

The PFI, a centrepiece of Treasury policy that has the full backing of the Prime Minister, is meant to draw private money into projects that in the past have been funded directly by the taxpayer. But much of business now sees the whole idea as no more than a fig-leaf to cover the nakedness of the Government's commitment to spending on roads, railways, hospitals, education and prisons.

The consensus in Birmingham was that it was a good idea gone horribly wrong. The public spending cuts are going ahead, but the PFI is bogged down in bureaucracy and incapable of filling the gap.

Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, will promise yet another expansion of the PFI in the Budget but you do not have to be a wizard at arithmetic to see how easily this can camouflage pub-



INDUSTRY VIEW
PETER RODGERS

lic spending cuts, to pay for a tax giveaway. The Chancellor and Michael Jack, the minister responsible for the PFI, are aware enough of the risk of the PFI falling apart if nothing is done.

Possible new projects worth a total of £25bn have been identified. The message from the Treasury to departmental permanent secretaries during the public expenditure round has been to bring forward your PFI projects because that is the only way you will be allowed to meet your investment targets.

This method of implementing the PFI has proved brutal indeed, and it is said that careers will be broken by failure to deliver.

The campaign is at least in part a reaction to foot-dragging throughout Whitehall during the first 18 months of the PFI,

when the number of contracts let was embarrassingly tiny. This summer, the Prime Minister got stumpy about it, and insisted that the whole Cabinet - which had not been uniformly enthusiastic - came into line. That resulted in the boot being put into permanent secretaries and a sharp increase in the number of deals clinched.

Even now, only £1.3bn of the £5bn contracts the Chancellor said a year ago would be let by next March have actually been agreed. That £5bn figure includes the £2.3bn Channel tunnel rail link, which does appear to be grinding slowly towards an agreement, but probably because of a rapid increase in the bribe - sorry, contribution - from the public purse.

If the CBI attack were not enough, Sir Alastair Morton,

the leading propagandist for the PFI until this summer, stuck the knife in deeper this week by asking in a public lecture, "Where's the beef?" Sir Alastair, a co-chairman of Eurotunnel, was chairman until the summer of the Private Finance Panel, a body whose job is to steer and promote the initiative.

He likened the situation when he left the panel to a tube of toothpaste: "Pressure on the initiation end has produced a bulging of the tube followed by a spurt from time to time as some, but not enough, of the product came out." He blamed private industry and - with a particularly sharp tongue - Whitehall.

The basic requirement of a PFI contract is that it transfers financial risk from the public to the private sector, so that the outlay no longer counts as public spending. Overruns on conventional public sector works are invariably paid for by taxpayers. Under the PFI, the company is also the operator of the project once it is completed, a new and higher level of risk.

Sir Alastair believes that to cope with this the PFI requires far stronger, better capitalised bidders than the ad hoc consortia of construction and IT companies, consultants and medical or prison equipment firms at present involved. ICI, BP, Shell and other giants used to owning as well as managing big projects might make a much better list of PFI contractors, but sadly are not interested.

Sir Alastair's harshest complaint is reserved for the way the Government has been implementing the PFI. Civil servants,

he believes, have yet to come to terms with a cultural change that requires them to understand and price commercial risks, and oversee services to be provided by the private sector over as long as 25 years.

The Treasury claims that as well as the effort from the top to persuade departments to push the PFI forward, it has begun a drive to retrain civil servants at all levels in spending departments in the new disciplines. But the numbers of people are small and the pace so slow it is hard to believe -

given that the task is to change the working method of entire divisions of the civil service - that this will make a dramatic difference within the timescale of the public spending cuts.

A deeper problem may be the Treasury itself. An organisation whose role in life is saying yes or no to other people's spending plans is not best suited to a crash programme of instilling an entrepreneurial culture in the rest of Whitehall.

Worse still, some projects, such as the Channel tunnel rail link, are being squeezed into the

PFI when they are probably better suited to public sector investment.

It may be that a brutal push is needed to make anything happen fast in Whitehall. But in this case, the motive for haste seems to be to kick-start the PFI before the election, so the Government can take the credit for the hoped for new investment.

By building up expectations, for political reasons, of how fast the PFI can deliver work to companies, the Government is discrediting a worthwhile exercise before it is fully operational.

CLASSIFIED

Legal Notices

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE
CHANCERY DIVISION
COMPANIES COURT

IN THE MATTER OF PROVIDENT MUTUAL LIFE ASSURANCE ASSOCIATION
- and -
IN THE MATTER OF GENERAL ACCIDENT LINKED LIFE ASSURANCE LIMITED
- and -

IN THE MATTER OF THE INSURANCE COMPANIES ACT 1982
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a Petition (the "Petition") was on the 4th October, 1995 presented to Her Majesty's High Court of Justice by the above-named Provident Mutual Life Assurance Association ("Provident Mutual") for the sanction of the Court under Part 1 of Schedule 2C to the Insurance Companies Act 1982 (the "Act") to a Scheme (the "Scheme") providing for the transfer to General Accident Linked Life Assurance Limited ("GA Linked Life") of the whole of the long term business (as defined by Section 1(1) of the said Act) of Provident Mutual and for certain ancillary provisions in connection with the said transfer under paragraph 5 of Schedule 2C to the Act.

Copies of the said Petition (containing the Scheme) and a Report by an Independent Actuary pursuant to paragraph 2 of Schedule 2C to the Act may be inspected at each of the offices specified in the Schedule hereto during normal business hours for a period of 21 days from the publication of this notice.

The Petition is directed to be heard before the Judge at the Royal Courts of Justice, Strand, London WC2A 2LL on the 20th December, 1995. Any person (including any employee of Provident Mutual or GA Linked Life) who claims that he or she would be adversely affected by the Scheme may appear at the time of the said hearing in person or by Counsel. Any person who intends so to appear, and any policyholder of Provident Mutual or GA Linked Life who dissents from the Scheme but does not intend so to appear, should give not less than two clear days' prior notice in writing of such intention or dissent and of the reasons therefor to the Solicitors named below.

Copies of the documents referred to above will be furnished by such Solicitors to any person requiring them prior to the making of an Order sanctioning the Scheme on prior payment of £17.40 (being a charge of 10p for each page).

Dated this 16th November, 1995
HERBERT SMITH, Exchange House, Primrose Street, London EC2A 2HS. Ref: 146/350 Solicitors for Provident Mutual

THE SCHEDULE
Offices of Provident Mutual
HEAD OFFICE: Six Hills Way, Sevenoaks, Kent TN11 9AT
REGISTERED OFFICE: 25-31 Moorgate, London EC2R 6BA
BELFAST: Solus House, 17-25 College Square, East Belfast BT1 6DE
BERMINGHAM: Lyndon House, Hagley Road, Birmingham B16 8PE
BRIGHTON: Suite 3, 3rd Floor, Clarendon, 190 Corporation Street, Birmingham B4 6QD
BRISTOL: 36 Frederick Place, Brighton BN1 4AE
BRIGHTON: 1-4 Portland Square, Bristol BS2 8PR
BRIGHTON: Crescent International Business Centre, Temple Way, Bristol BS1 6EZ
CROYDON: Langdown House, 17 Langdown Road, Croydon CR0 2BX
GLASGOW: Unit 1, Buchanan Court, Buchanan Business Park, Camberland Road, Stepps, Glasgow G33 6HX
GLASGOW: 93 West George Street, Glasgow G2 1PB
HARROW: 1-3 Tyburn Lane, Harrow HA1 3AP
LEEDS: Joseph's Well, Harrower Walk, Park Lane, Leeds LS3 1AB
LEEDS: 30 Park Place, Leeds LS1 2SP
LONDON City: Garden House, 18 Finsbury Circus, London EC2M 7LX
LONDON West End: Victoria Station House, 191 Victoria Street, London SW1E 5NE
MAIDSTONE: 6-8 Albion Place, Sittingbourne Road, Maidstone ME14 5DY
MANCHESTER: Suite 16, Manchester International Office Centre, Spyl Road, Wyndham, Manchester M22 5WB
MANCHESTER: Suite House, 83-85 Mosley Street, Manchester M2 3LG
NEWCASTLE: 2nd Floor, Kelburn House, 7-19 Mosley Street, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne NE1 1VE
NORTHAMPTON: 29 St. Katherine's Street, Northampton NN1 2QZ
NORWICH: Westgate House, 14-18 Westgate, Norwich NR1 3LA
NOTTINGHAM: 4-8 Regent Street, Nottingham NG1 5BQ
READING: St. Giles House, 25 King's Road, Reading RG1 3AR
ROMFORD: York House, 50 Western Road, Romford RM1 3LP
SITTINGBOURNE: 3-9 Station Street, Sittingbourne ME10 3DU
SOUTHAMPTON: Grosvenor House, Cumberland Place, Southampton SO1 2BD
STEVENAGE: Grosvenor House, 142 High Street, Stevenage, Herts SG1 1DB
Offices of GA Linked Life Group companies
YORK: 2 Roughton Street, York YO1 1HR
PERTH: Pitheavie, Perth, Scotland PH2 0NH
CARDIFF: General Buildings, 31-33 Newport Road, Cardiff CF2 1TQ
SWANSEA: General Buildings, 163 St. Helen's Road, Swansea SA1 4DJ

Legal Notices

No. 006178 of 1995

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BUSINESS BANKING CHARGES*					
All rates in pence	Monthly	T&B	Overlays	Net Value	Business Direct
DEBITS					
Cheques	48	55	58	64	18
Standing Orders	48	55	58	70	18
Direct Debits	48	55	58	64	18
Cheques Cashed	48	55	58	73	FREE
CREDITS					
Cheques	79	95	98	81	FREE
Automated	12.5	19	18	17.5	FREE

What do you make of the table above? Or, more importantly, what does your bank make? If you're in credit, high banking charges are now a thing of the past. This is because we've reduced our overheads by cutting the cost of a traditional branch manager and network. Instead we operate from a central business administration centre. The savings are passed on to you and you earn more in interest. Our banking service lets you carry out a full range of transactions over the phone, whenever you want, day or night and you can simply use the post to pay in. So if your business is always in credit and you have no plans for borrowing, you should only have one thing to declare. Your name.

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Organisation name: _____ Address: _____
Postcode: _____ Phone number: _____

Are you: A limited company or society ☐ A sole trader or partnership ☐ A school ☐ An unincorporated miscellaneous organisation ☐

*This is based on an independent survey and reflects standard rates.

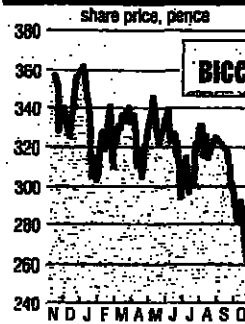
The Co-operative Bank plc, 1 Balcon Street, Manchester M40 4BP

market report/shares

DATA BANK

FT-SE 100
3,610.8 + 39.4
FT-SE 250
3,960.8 + 38.6
FT-SE 350
1,794.2 + 19.1
SEAQ VOLUME
731.3m shares,
32,729 bargains
Gifts Index
94.92 + 0.59

SHARE SPOTLIGHT



Insurers sparkle as the Footsie smashes 3,600 barrier

Blue chips soared to a new peak with the FT-SE 100 index crashing through the 3,600 barrier for the first time.

Growing hopes of an interest rate cut, the sharp inflation improvement and increasing confidence about the Budget created the excitement.

And, seemingly inevitably, New York made a significant contribution. Yet more records as the Dow Jones Average marched remorselessly towards 5,000 points inspired London, although the gap between the two markets yawned even wider.

The FT-SE 100 index ended 39.4 points higher at 3,610.8 with double-figure gains spread through the top 100 shares. Government stocks offered support with the benchmark gilt due 2017, over £1 higher.

It is, however, very much a blue-chip share party. Although the index measuring the

next 250 shares was sharply higher it is short of its record. The two indices clearly demonstrate how the current party has divided the stock market, with blue chips enjoying a boom but others having a much more subdued time.

The FT-SE 250 index, at 3,960.8, is nearly 200 points below its peak, established when blue chips and second-liners were advancing in unison in February last year. Then the two indices reached record levels together.

Insurers were the outstanding performers with Legal & General's decision to shake up its long-term funds sparking the enthusiasm.

The move, which should increase dividend growth, is likely to be followed by other insurers. L&G jumped 22p to 667p and Prudential Corporation, the day's best-performing blue chip, 20p to 415p. Sun Alliance improved 14p to



MARKET REPORT

DEREK PAIN

Stock market reporter of the year

371p and Royal Insurance 13p to 380p.

The market was quick to take the view that the L&G move was not unrelated to the bid speculation that has swirled around the group. There is a strong belief the insurers are due for bid action. If not L&G, the market believes Royal will be the target.

It is surprising the industry has managed to avoid the flood of financial bids that has engulfed merchant and retail banks and fund managers.

Zeneca continued to suffer the torment of takeover rumours, surging to another peak, Roche and Ciba-Geigy, the Swiss duo, were replaced

as bid favourites by another Swiss group, Sandoz. It has, it was said, signalled it intended to make a big buy although a few months ago it seemed to rule itself out of the Zeneca running. Zeneca finished up 22.5p at 1,313p. Glaxo Wellcome gained 23p to 888p. It intends to appeal against last week's legal judgment that the Inland Revenue can pursue the group for back tax.

The scent of lower interest rates captivated builders and retailers. Barratt Developments, expecting to "comfortably" exceed last year's house sales, rose 5p to 218p and Baxters 4p to 167p.

BICC gained 12p to 265p, a

two-day advance of 21p. The shares have been bumping along around their year's low and there are suggestions the group is vulnerable to a lurking predator.

Among stores, Storehouse, figures next week, rose 9p to 320p and Kingfisher 14p to 514p. Shell, up 11p to 769p, was spurred by an investment presentation, with its Nigerian involvement again brushed aside.

United News & Media, awaiting disposal developments, jumped 31p to 570p. Other newspaper shares were firm ahead of the Times price increase. Mirror Group Newspapers gained 13p to 180p and the Telegraph 19p to 428p.

Cowie, the garage and leasing group, motored on the back of Merrill Lynch support, advancing 16p to 292p. Rolls-Royce, with another contract under its belt, topped its 1987 flotation price, rising 3p to

170.5p. Figures left Cable and Wireless 2p higher at 423p.

Inchcape weakened again on currency worries, off 11p at 295p. Vodafone remained under pressure from cash-call worries, falling 3.5p to 252p, and BT brushed its year's low, falling 2p to 362.5p on competition worries.

Euro Disney fell 25p to 169p on further consideration of its modest profit and First Choice firmed to 60p after reporting a 72.1 per cent rights take-up. Premier Land had to be content with a paltry 17.1 per cent rights response. The shares held at 4.25p.

CE Heath, confirmed its computer flotation plans but fell 5p to 163p on figures. Unipalm jumped 57p to 755p as the value of the US bid continued to increase.

A Beckman, the textile business, held at 59p. The move to take the company private at 60p a share was approved.

TAKING STOCK

The reshaping of Farringford as one of the new-style pub companies continues with Alastair Mowat, ex-Scottish & Newcastle, moving in as chief executive. In August Farringford, which had survived by running just one Isle of Wight hotel, took on the management of 210 former Scottish pubs. Trevor Hemmings, a director of the brewing giant, is a big shareholder. Other pub deals are expected. The shares held at 15.5p; they were 6p in August.

Cedardata, the supplier of financial accounting computer software, fell 4p to 172p. Gidon Shamir has resigned as a non-executive director and Greg Middleton, the stockbroker, placed his family's shareholding of 1 million shares with institutions at 167.5p. It came to market 18 months ago at 105p.

SHARE PRICE DATA

Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is last year's dividend, grossed up by 20 per cent, as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (P/E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding exceptional items.

Other details: ex Ex rights x Ex-dividend x Ex-all a Unlisted Securities Market x Suspended x Partly Paid x Nil Paid Shares. Source: Financial.

THE INDEPENDENT INDEX

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UK Stock Market Report 01 Bullion Report 05 White Shares 30
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MARKET LEADERS: TOP 20 VOLUMES

Stock	Vol/100	Stock	Vol/100	Stock	Vol/100
ASDA Group	21,000	Vodafone	10,000	TSB	8,100
Prudential	20,000	Barratt	8,000	Hammer	7,100
BT	17,000	Seagull	8,000	Leamington	7,000
WPI	13,000	Tarmac	8,000	Carroll's	6,000
BTM	11,000	Albert Heijn	8,000	Rank Group	6,000
				Cable & Wire	5,000

FT-SE 100 INDEX HOUR BY HOUR		14.00 3596.5 up 25.1	
Open 3593.2 up 21.8	11.00 3596.5 up 35.2	15.00 3595.1 up 23.7	
08.00 3593.3 up 21.9	12.00 3601.5 up 30.1	16.00 3610.8 up 38.9	
16.00 3595.7 up 28.3	13.00 3599.8 up 28.4	Close 3610.8 up 38.4	

Stock	Price	Change	Stock	Price	Change
ASDA Group	172.0	+1.0	BT	362.5	-2.0
Barratt Developments	218.0	+5.0	BTM	110.0	+1.0
Baxters	167.0	+4.0	BTM	110.0	+1.0
Bellway	167.0	+4.0	BTM	110.0	+1.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0	BTM	110.0	+1.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0	BTM	110.0	+1.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0	BTM	110.0	+1.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0	BTM	110.0	+1.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0	BTM	110.0	+1.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0	BTM	110.0	+1.0

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA Group	172.0	+1.0
Barratt Developments	218.0	+5.0
Baxters	167.0	+4.0
Bellway	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0

TEXTILES & APPAREL

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA Group	172.0	+1.0
Barratt Developments	218.0	+5.0
Baxters	167.0	+4.0
Bellway	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
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Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0

TOBACCO

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA Group	172.0	+1.0
Barratt Developments	218.0	+5.0
Baxters	167.0	+4.0
Bellway	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
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Biffaward	167.0	+4.0

TRANSPORT

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA Group	172.0	+1.0
Barratt Developments	218.0	+5.0
Baxters	167.0	+4.0
Bellway	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
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Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0

WATER

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA Group	172.0	+1.0
Barratt Developments	218.0	+5.0
Baxters	167.0	+4.0
Bellway	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
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Biffaward	167.0	+4.0

SUPPORT SERVICES

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA Group	172.0	+1.0
Barratt Developments	218.0	+5.0
Baxters	167.0	+4.0
Bellway	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
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Biffaward	167.0	+4.0

PROPERTY

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA Group	172.0	+1.0
Barratt Developments	218.0	+5.0
Baxters	167.0	+4.0
Bellway	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
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Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0

PHARMACEUTICALS

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA Group	172.0	+1.0
Barratt Developments	218.0	+5.0
Baxters	167.0	+4.0
Bellway	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0

PRINTING & PAPER

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA Group	172.0	+1.0
Barratt Developments	218.0	+5.0
Baxters	167.0	+4.0
Bellway	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0

LIFE ASSURANCE

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA Group	172.0	+1.0
Barratt Developments	218.0	+5.0
Baxters	167.0	+4.0
Bellway	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
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Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0

MEDIA

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA Group	172.0	+1.0
Barratt Developments	218.0	+5.0
Baxters	167.0	+4.0
Bellway	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0

GOVERNMENT SECURITIES

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA Group	172.0	+1.0
Barratt Developments	218.0	+5.0
Baxters	167.0	+4.0
Bellway	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
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Biffaward	167.0	+4.0

SHORTS

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA Group	172.0	+1.0
Barratt Developments	218.0	+5.0
Baxters	167.0	+4.0
Bellway	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
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Biffaward	167.0	+4.0

MEDIUMS

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA Group	172.0	+1.0
Barratt Developments	218.0	+5.0
Baxters	167.0	+4.0
Bellway	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
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Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0

LONGS

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA Group	172.0	+1.0
Barratt Developments	218.0	+5.0
Baxters	167.0	+4.0
Bellway	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
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INDEX-LINKED

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA Group	172.0	+1.0
Barratt Developments	218.0	+5.0
Baxters	167.0	+4.0
Bellway	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
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Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0

UNDATED

Stock	Price	Change
ASDA Group	172.0	+1.0
Barratt Developments	218.0	+5.0
Baxters	167.0	+4.0
Bellway	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
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Biffaward	167.0	+4.0
Biffaward	167.0	+4.0

first direct experienced:
over 25,000,000
calls received since
we opened

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Foreign Exchange Rates

STERLING				DOLLAR				D-MARK			
Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	Country	Spot	1 month	3 months
US	15653	0-18	35-38	UK	1000	-	-	US	07005	-	-
Canada	21077	0-27	51-61	France	13543	14-19	42-42	France	10177	0-20	44-42
Germany	23835	52-45	100-140	Italy	14085	21-19	58-60	Italy	10177	0-20	44-42
Japan	20925	45-52	100-140	Spain	43586	9-17	30-45	Spain	10177	0-20	44-42
Switzerland	25085	88-94	200-282	Belgium	10012	64-71	102-104	Belgium	10177	0-20	44-42
ECU	15081	3-7	34-37	Portugal	10012	64-71	102-104	Portugal	10177	0-20	44-42
Belgium	24573	10-18	32-37	Sweden	12890	3-5	10-12	Sweden	10177	0-20	44-42
Denmark	15938	10-18	32-37	Austria	10012	64-71	102-104	Austria	10177	0-20	44-42
Netherlands	24573	10-18	32-37	Greece	54826	25-25	60-80	Greece	10177	0-20	44-42
Ireland	0274	9-7	22-26	Finland	15780	28-28	80-75	Finland	10177	0-20	44-42
Portugal	10012	64-71	102-104	Yugoslavia	10012	64-71	102-104	Yugoslavia	10177	0-20	44-42
Spain	10012	64-71	102-104	Czech Republic	10012	64-71	102-104	Czech Republic	10177	0-20	44-42
Sweden	12890	3-5	10-12	Slovakia	10012	64-71	102-104	Slovakia	10177	0-20	44-42
Switzerland	25085	88-94	200-282	Poland	10012	64-71	102-104	Poland	10177	0-20	44-42
United Kingdom	1000	-	-	Hungary	10012	64-71	102-104	Hungary	10177	0-20	44-42
France	13543	14-19	42-42	Romania	10012	64-71	102-104	Romania	10177	0-20	44-42
Italy	14085	21-19	58-60	Bulgaria	10012	64-71	102-104	Bulgaria	10177	0-20	44-42
Japan	20925	45-52	100-140	Slovenia	10012	64-71	102-104	Slovenia	10177	0-20	44-42
South Africa	10012	64-71	102-104	Croatia	10012	64-71	102-104	Croatia	10177	0-20	44-42
Singapore	2381	0-0	0-0	Montenegro	10012	64-71	102-104	Montenegro	10177	0-20	44-42

OTHER SPOT RATES

Country	Spot	Country	Spot	Country	Spot	Country	Spot
Argentina	15550	Chile	10000	Colombia	10000	Costa Rica	10000
Brazil	15434	Ecuador	10000	Cuba	10000	Czech Republic	10000
Canada	21077	El Salvador	10000	Dominican Republic	10000	Denmark	10000
France	13543	Honduras	10000	Guatemala	10000	Egypt	10000
Germany	23835	Mexico	10000	Guinea	10000	Greece	10000
India	10000	Nicaragua	10000	Guinea-Bissau	10000	Ireland	10000
Indonesia	10000	Panama	10000	Guinea-Bissau	10000	Italy	10000
Japan	20925	Paraguay	10000	Guinea-Bissau	10000	Japan	10000
Korea	10000	Peru	10000	Guinea-Bissau	10000	Korea	10000
Malaysia	10000	Puerto Rico	10000	Guinea-Bissau	10000	Malaysia	10000
Mexico	10000	Qatar	10000	Guinea-Bissau	10000	Mexico	10000
Netherlands	10000	Romania	10000	Guinea-Bissau	10000	Netherlands	10000
Portugal	10000	Saudi Arabia	10000	Guinea-Bissau	10000	Portugal	10000
Romania	10000	Singapore	10000	Guinea-Bissau	10000	Romania	10000
Saudi Arabia	10000	South Africa	10000	Guinea-Bissau	10000	Saudi Arabia	10000
Singapore	10000	Spain	100				

Notes: Forward rates quoted in line are for a discount (outward) from spot rates; those quoted in line to right are at a premium (inward) to spot rates. *Values quoted as indicative. For the latter, forward rates may vary from 120-1200. Cable cost 30p/cable (cable cost 40p/cable).

Tourist Rates

E Euro			E Euro			E Euro		
Australia(Dollars)	23800	France(Francs)	14100	23300	New Zealand(Dollars)	23600		
Canada(Dollars)	14000	Germany(Mark)	360000		Portugal(Pescetas)	204000		
Denmark(Danish)	10000	Greece(Drachmas)	360000		Spain(Pesetas)	160000		
France(Francs)	14100	Hong Kong(Dollars)	10000		Sweden(Kronor)	10000		
Germany(Mark)	360000	India(Rupees)	10000		Switzerland(Swiss)	10000		
Greece(Drachmas)	360000	Indonesia(Rupiah)	10000		United States(Dollars)	10000		
Hong Kong(Dollars)	10000	Japan(Yen)	10000					
India(Rupees)	10000	Korea(Won)	10000					
Indonesia(Rupiah)	10000	Malaysia(Ringgit)	10000					
Japan(Yen)	10000	Netherlands(Guilder)	10000					
Korea(Won)	10000	Portugal(Pescetas)	10000					
Malaysia(Ringgit)	10000	Romania(Lei)	10000					
Netherlands(Guilder)	10000	Saudi Arabia(Riyal)	10000					
New Zealand(Dollars)	23600	Singapore(Dollar)	10000					
Portugal(Pescetas)	204000	South Africa(Rand)	10000					
Spain(Pesetas)	160000	Sweden(Kronor)	10000					
Sweden(Kronor)	10000	Switzerland(Swiss)	10000					
Switzerland(Swiss)	10000	United States(Dollars)	10000					
United States(Dollars)	10000							

Interest Rates

UK			Germany			US			Japan		
Bank	6.75%	Discount	3.50%	Bank	6.75%	Discount	3.50%	Bank	6.75%	Discount	3.50%
Prime	10.00%	Discount	5.00%	Prime	10.00%	Discount	5.00%	Prime	10.00%	Discount	5.00%
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The compulsive dice game for compulsive liars.

[illegible]

sport

England signal the end of hoof and chase

Glenn Moore on a promising display by Terry Venables' patient performers

Roy Hodgson was generous in defeat. "If English football is as bad as all the inquests keep saying it is, it must be a remarkable performance by the coaching staff to get the national team playing like that." So said the Switzerland manager after his team had lost 3-1 to England at Wembley on Wednesday.

Hodgson meant that the English game was not that bad after all. Maybe not, but his comments are more accurate when taken at face value. English club results in Europe have been so consistently poor that there clearly is a lot wrong with their game.

It is partly due to technique, but it is also a question of knowledge and approach. The "remarkable achievement" of Terry Venables and his staff is that they have coached England players not to play the way they do at club level.

The message is getting through. Before Wednesday's match Tony Adams and David Platt both talked of the need for patience; during the game most of the team showed it. Teddy Sheringham's goal followed at least 15 passes involving every outfield player except Alan Shearer and Adams. Stuart Pearce and Paul Gascoigne were each involved three or more times as England patiently probed for an opening on the left while getting forward in numbers. They then switched the play and attacked from the right.

"I was pleased that, when we could not go forward, we did not try and force it and lose the ball," Venables said. "We brought the ball back out, moved them around and made space to get quality balls forward. We changed the play well."

Other chance-creating moves were similarly prolonged. At last the hoof-and-chase "direct-play" philosophy as espoused by Charles Hughes is being expunged from official policy (even if Hughes is still the FA's director of coaching and education).

To be fair to Hughes his philosophy may have worked 20 years ago, but defences are better organised now, teams defend deeper and in greater numbers and patience and cunning is usually required to break them down. There is, however, still a case for direct football of a different type - as Steve Stone showed with his aggressive running and preparedness

cross the ball. "He was first class," Venables said. "He looks like he has been there for years, he did so when he first came into the squad. He is a fighter, too, which is useful to have when things are not going well."

Stone's success contrasted with Steve McManaman's ineffectiveness. Tying him to a fixed role on the left, as appeared to happen, dramatically reduces his potency. He is too one-footed to go by defenders on the left wing with any consistency. Yet giving him a free role would affect England's defensive discipline and shape.

Unfortunately there are no obvious alternatives - the only English-born left-footed winger of international class is Ryan Giggs. Darren Anderton, is one possibility, if he can regain fitness in time, for his game offers more than McManaman's.

"Can Anderton play on the left?" Venables was asked. "He can do so many things. He can play in a free role, in the centre, on the right or left. He has two good feet. He and Stone could play in the same team."

Between the wide players it is worth persevering with Jamie Redknapp and Paul Gascoigne. The only reservation is Gascoigne's lack of tactical discipline. Venables noted: "At 2-1 up he left his position too often and isolated Robert [Lee]. I wanted him to boss the midfield and rely on the front four to get the third goal but he was up the left wing and... I don't know." Gascoigne, as ever, can still perplex and infuriate even the most understanding of managers.

The hard-working Lee covered well for him on Wednesday, better than Redknapp would. However, Redknapp has a better touch and vision while Lee looks more of a squad player than a first-choice international.

Further forward, Sheringham's thoughtful performance causes as many problems as it solves. Peter Beardsley has more nous, Nick Barmby more pace and energy, yet Shearer seems happier with Sheringham than either. He is certainly happier playing in a partnership.

England next play Portugal, on 12 December. Venables has just one day - a Tuesday - to prepare for the match. It may not be long enough to switch from playing Premiership rush, to international patience.



Ball winner: Alan Shearer appears happier with Sheringham sharing the striking role for England

Photograph: David Ashdown

Hair loss proving England's gain

Those who were surprised at Steve Stone's sudden and accomplished success in the England team clearly have less of a grasp of footballing heritage than Terry Venables. Stone's arrival marked a return to a tradition apparently lost under the managership of Graham Taylor: the crucial role to be played in the national set-up by the midfield slap-head.

Football history is littered with the feats of the prematurely hair-free. Some, like Ralph Coates, Terry Hennessey, David Armstrong and the daddy of them all, Bobby Charlton, cheered the nation's heart both with their efforts on the field, and

the manner in which they fought so valiantly against the reality of hair loss. Coates, for instance, is remembered for the extraordinary manner in which he left not only full-backs trailing in his wake, but also a bloom of hair which he had earlier scraped over the top of his dome from more hirsute parts of his body in the unlikely hope we would all believe it grew out of his scalp rather than his arm-pit.

Not that you can blame players like Coates for trying to disguise their problem. Even in these days when the fashion is for a number one crop, it is no easy life being a footballer bereft of barnet. Stone, re-

member, is the same age as Jamie Redknapp, but it seems unlikely the acreage of his bare bonce adorns as many teenage bedroom walls as Redknapp's trendily teased locks. At every stadium he plays, the cries of derision will echo in his ears. That includes the City Ground. Even when fans attempt to cheer on the tonorially challenged player on their own team, they can't help pointing

out his handicap ("Stevie Bould, Stevie Bould," chant Arsenal fans, "he ain't got no hair, but we don't care.")

Thus to succeed against these odds, the youthful baldie will develop nerves of steel and the determination of a soldier ant.

The fear involved in stepping out at Wembley for the first time will be as nothing to the suffering endured when being called "Butt-tuck-head" during a League encounter with Middlesbrough. This extra edge developed by no-hairs has been recognised by other national teams. The Italians, for instance, have Lombardo, a role model for the thinning everywhere. And arguably the best midfielder in the last World Cup was Letchkov of Bulgaria, a man who claimed his hair loss was precipitated by fall-out from Chernobyl.

As yet Stone has not blamed Druridge Bay power station, just up the coast from his Gateshead birthplace, for his premature follicle damage, but nonetheless, after Wednesday his future in an England shirt looks assured. And if Terry Venables takes the hint, matches him in midfield with Draper of Aston Villa and persuades Gazza to stick his head in a basin-full of Immac, the European Championship is as good as England's.

Another force rises on Tyneside

Non-League notebook
RUPERT METCALF

The Premiership leaders, Newcastle United, are not the only footballing success story on Tyneside this season. On the south side of the river, Gateshead are enjoying their best campaign for years, and could claim second place in the GM Vauxhall Conference if they beat Kettering at the International Stadium tomorrow.

The successors to the club of the same name who lost their place in the Football League in 1960, Gateshead have a realistic chance of promotion to the Third Division. The facilities at their home ground, which is more famous for hosting high-profile athletics events, ensure they will not suffer the same fate as Kidderminster and Macclesfield, both denied access to the Endleigh League because of problems with their grounds. The man behind their rise is Colin Richardson, who took charge at Gateshead two years ago. He won 25 trophies at his five previous clubs - Ferryhill, Wickham, Newcastle, Bine Star, North Shields and Bridlington Town - and he is still hungry for more.

Richardson firmly believes his side can win the Conference this season. "That's what we're all in it for," he said last night, as he looked forward to extending his team's run of six wins in their last seven matches. "We're scoring goals now and not giving them away. We've changed a few things for the better."

Unlike some of their rivals in the Conference, who have paid out sizeable fees to strengthen their squads, Gateshead have signed their five recruits this term on free transfers: strikers Dean Trott from Northampton, Paul Thompson from Hartlepool and Sam Kitchen from Doncaster, plus midfielder Derek Ord from Greta and goalkeeper Sean Musgrave from Sunderland. Richardson is so confident in his squad's ability that he has allowed the club's top scorer for the past two seasons, Paul Dobson, to move on to Bishop Auckland for a four-figure fee.

Chris holding CD case up. ...ACTUALLY, CAN YOU GET ME THIS ON VINYL. HAVE WE GOT THIS ON VINYL? Yeah there's one in the box Jamie fetches Vanessa Paradis 7-inch ...but I don't think the turntable is working, Chris. DON'T WORRY. RECORD PLEASE... puts record on turntable and needle on record But the turntable's bust... I DON'T WANT TO PLAY IT, I'M JUST GOING TO SMASH IT FOR THE FRENCH PROTEST.

The Breakfast Show
DJ: Chris Evans
Time: 6:30 - 9am
Mondays - Fridays
Frequency 97 - 99FM



ONE as it is

Win a Ski holiday to Keystone, Colorado with the INDEPENDENT

Plus K2 skis and snowboards to be won

If you fancy danger and excitement then let us introduce you to the ultimate adrenalin kick - extreme skiing. To celebrate the release of Warren Miller's new ski film - *Endless Winter* (presented by Labatt's Blue) which offers spectacular ski and snowboard footage, we've teamed up with Black Diamond Films to bring you your own taste of extreme skiing.

We are offering readers of the *Independent* the chance to start the ski season in style with our Extreme Ski prize draw. Our exclusive first prize is a seven day holiday for two in the majestic mountains of Colorado, USA. You'll be staying in the top ski resort of Keystone which offers world-class accommodation plus the superb experience of night skiing. Not only that, but with your interchangeable lift ticket you'll be able to take to the slopes of Keystone, Breckenridge and Arapahoe Basin.

Spoilt for choice, you'll be able to ski and snowboard through champagne powder snow glistening beneath deep blue Colorado skies.

For our next six winners, we have a fabulous range of K2 skis and snowboards to choose from. The four ski models available are the FX 11.2 from the Adrenalin series; MSL10.0 from the Attack series; 5500 CS from the Unlimited series and the 5500 NS from the ladies Unlimited series. If you'd like to try your hand at snowboarding, then you could be surfing on K2's Dart Freestyle snowboard or the Eldorado 164 Extreme and Freeriding snowboard.

Twenty-four readers will receive a pair of Vail Regulator Goggles from Smith, the number one brand in the UK. These goggles feature an advanced anti-fog system, perfect for the serious skier. Fifty readers will receive a Turtle Fur neck warmer, great for mountain tops and bus stops! Also available are three 'hundred' copies of Warren Miller's video *Born to Ski*. Destined to take your breath away, it features extreme skiing at its best. Another seven winners will each receive a case of Labatt's Blue Beer.

How to enter:

To enter our prize draw you must collect five differently numbered tokens from the seven we are publishing this week in the *Independent* on Sunday and the *Independent* on Saturday. One token must come from the *Independent* on Sunday. Today we print Token 6, we will print an entry form on Saturday.

Rules are as previously published. The first five readers to call this telephone number today (10am - 7pm), 0371 240 4071, quoting Independent Extreme Ski Cinema Tour Offer, will each receive a free pair of tickets for the 8.30pm performance of *Endless Winter* on Saturday 18 November at the Prince Charles Cinema, Leicester Square, London. For further information on your nearest venue call the ticket hotline number above. Tickets are available for £4.99 in advance or £5.99 on the door. For information on new low airfare packages (from £325) to Keystone and Breckenridge in Colorado, call 0800 891772.



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Blue



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SMITH

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Final qualifying

Charlton's

Early buyers

FIRST TEST: Atherton gives valuable solidity as England offer hope for the series after recovering from another depressing start

Hick's sense of history averts crisis

Cricket

MARTIN JOHNSON
reports from Pretoria
England 221-4
v South Africa

When it came to making history yesterday, the fact that the last TV pictures of an England-South Africa Test match were broadcast in black and white was a reasonably strong contender, but compared to England failing to make a total porridge of the first day of a Test series, it was not really in the same frame.

Twenty-four hours into most recent series, England have effectively been history themselves, but after initially threatening to disappear down the same depressing gully, Graeme Hick and Michael Atherton provided hope that England's batsmen versus South Africa's fast bowlers will not be the one-sided contest many people feared.

Atherton, whose long-standing back trouble may be partially due to the amount of times he has carried his team on it, made a typically stoical 78 before splicing the second new ball to gully, while Hick, whose expression range normally runs from blank to deadpan, was so delighted by a wonderfully positive fourth Test match century, that he only just stopped short of a series of handstands.

These two rallied England from a precarious 64 for 3, and if Atherton - who had grown visibly more weary after lunch - had managed to hang on until the close, it would have been an even more satisfying day. As for South Africa the only real bonus was a highly impressive debut from another fast bowling Pollock, Shaun.

As England, having preferred Richard Illingworth to Devon

Malcolm, would have batted first by choice had they not been invited to, their first Test match loss against South Africa for 30 years was something of an irrelevance. They will also have been relieved that the pitch was a long way from the trampoline that was forecast, even though Atherton - hit twice on the helmet and once on the shoulder - ended the day with a bruise and a headache.

The history of the occasion was slightly lost on the South African public, who turned up for the first Test between these two countries in 30 years in something closer to drabbles than droves. On top of which, if there was one black face in the crowd of 9,000, it was hard to spot among all the white and red ones.

Why this should have been hard to say, although the fact that this match is being played in the mainly white region of what used to be called Verwoerdburg might have had something to do with it. A place with that kind of name would hardly have had blacks queuing up outside the estate agents' windows.

More likely, though, is the fact that the Test match culture was all but lost to the instant variety during the years of isolation, and a one-day froth society will need a bit of weaning back on to solids. Whether yesterday will have helped is a moot point, in that South Africa's attack is one-dimensional to the point of utter tedium.

However, their fielding is probably even more brilliant than Australia's, and the diving catch at backward square-leg to dismiss Alec Stewart off a full-blooded pull was close to unbelievable. What was even more remarkable was the fact that the fielder, Craig Matthews, spilled a relatively simple return catch offered by Hick on 67.

The fall of England's second wicket, at 36, did nothing to remove the suspicion that Mark Ramprakash has developed some kind of mental block at this level. It was a ghastly poke outside off stump at Donald, and in his 18th Test, Ramprakash managed to knock another small percentage off a miserable average of less than 18.

England's problems continued when Graham Thorpe, who for one reason or another had barely spent any time at the crease before this match, snicked a catch behind to provide young Pollock with his first Test wicket. England lunched at 64 for 3, and might easily have been driven into a shell of strokelessness.

The fact that they were not was gratifying for more than one reason. Centurion Park's electronic screen was in danger of exploding from gimmick overload every time a boundary was struck, and the idea of signalling a four with a cartoon of a woman removing her spectacles and then putting them back on, is certainly a novel one.

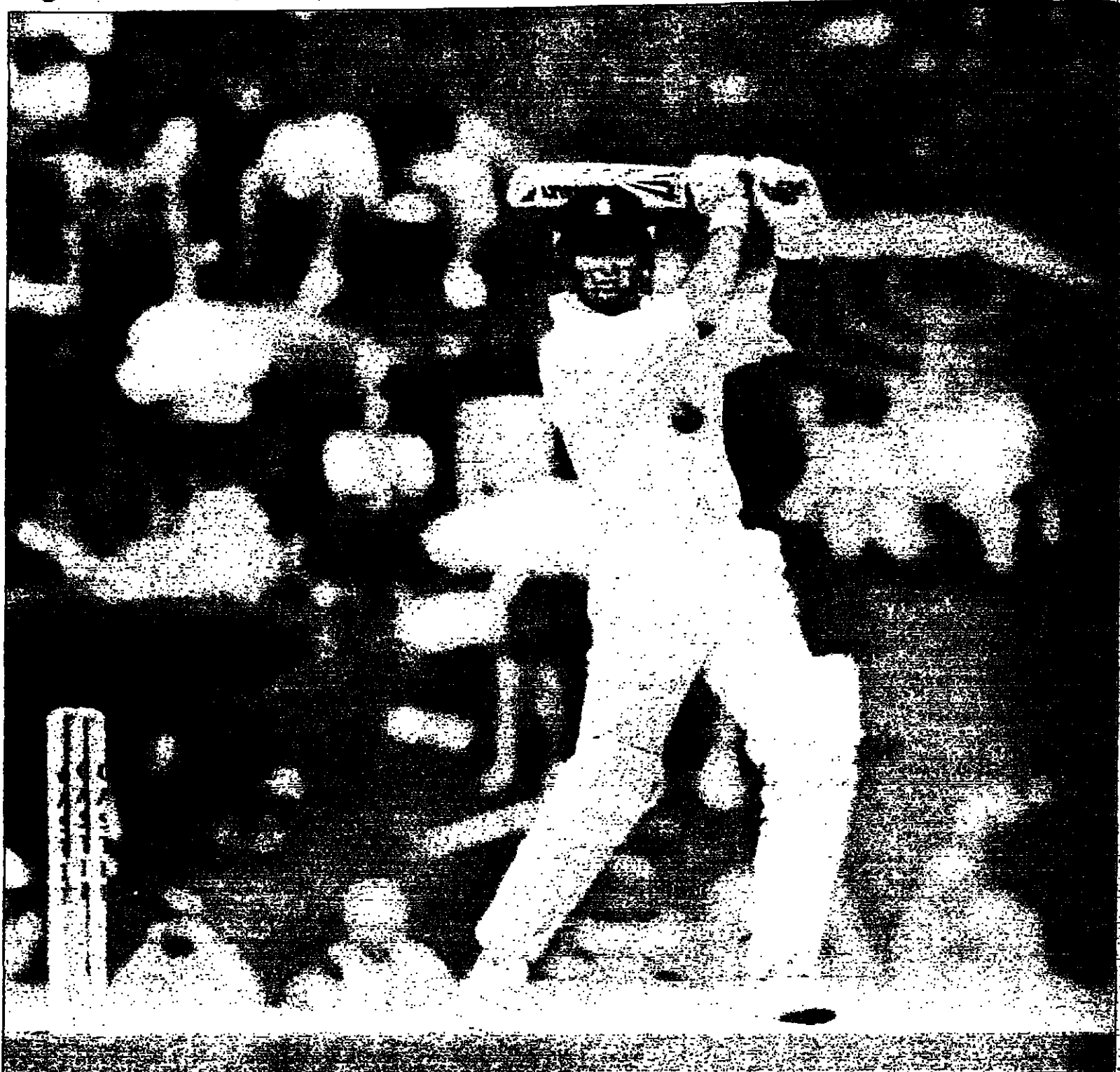
As spectators were also invited to perform the tiresome Mexican wave (happily without success) by a moustachioed character in a sombrero, with the word WAVE flashed up in capital letters, this might provide some idea of South Africa's idea of subtlety.

By far the best example, though, is a TV advert in which a bare-bottomed Will Carling lookalike clambers into the Princess of Wales' bedroom, only to find he has been beaten to it by the entire South African rugby team.

Neither was there much subtlety about the way South Africa bowled to Atherton and Hick in particular, but while Atherton battled away in largely heroic defence for five and a half hours, Hick was unrecognisable as the timid character he often looks when cricket balls are hitting past his visor.

Allan Donald and Pollock were always a handful, but Hick was imperiously dismissive of the distinctly underdog back-up team of Brett Schultz, Matthews and Brian McMillan. Hick's first delivery, a no-ball from Pollock which he pawdly spliced out on the leg side, gave no hint of the spanking he was about to deliver.

Hick's ability has never been in question, merely his character. This was the first time he has done it for England in a crisis and, to give the man his due, it was not far short of brilliant.



Staying power: Graeme Hick drives through the covers during his century at Centurion Park yesterday

Photograph: Graham Chadwick/Allsport

'I had a lot to prove to people and myself'

Graeme Hick's fourth Test hundred yesterday provided some welcome evidence that he is coming to terms with pace bowling at Test match level. Last summer's three-figure contribution against the West Indies on a low, slow Trent Bridge pitch still left a question mark over Hick's technique but here, there was enough bounce to keep South Africa's five fast men - led by Allan Donald - interested. They

tried plenty of bouncers but Hick responded with 21 boundaries in his priceless, unbeaten 105.

"Playing fast bowling has been something I've worried about in the past," Hick admitted. "But it's not anything that really bothers me."

If that sounds contradictory, the Worcestershire batsman was altogether easier to follow during his four-hour innings. Since being dropped at Old Trafford last summer, Hick has

responded with Test scores of 118 not out, 7, 96, 51 not out and now an unbeaten 105. At last, the player who has dominated county cricket is showing his worth at Test level. "I was very disappointed to be left out during the summer and had a lot to prove to people and myself after that," he said.

"I thoroughly enjoyed the day and think it was quite an important hundred."

However, Hick's contribution was not the only highlight

as England recovered from 64 for 3 after being put in, Mike Atherton's innings of 78 proving equally as crucial.

"He played very well," said Hick, after his stand of 142 with Atherton. "We've had a good day - it would have been a superb day if Mike was still at the crease."

For South Africa, electing to field first with an all-pace attack did not have the desired effect of wreaking havoc with the England batsmen.

"We took a gamble," admitted Bob Woolmer, their English coach.

"We hoped the pitch would be more conducive to seam and swing but the ball did not go sideways all day."

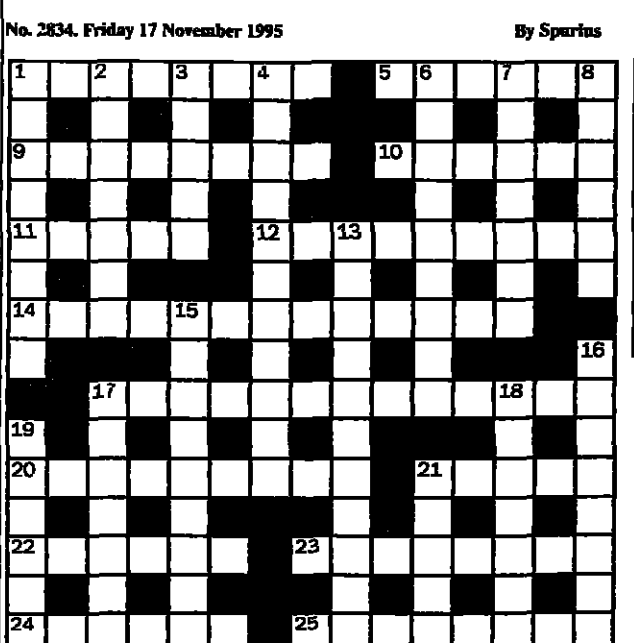
"Hick and Atherton played superbly and really got stuck in after lunch."

That's what Test cricket is all about. But our bowlers kept it and a couple of quick wickets in the morning will make it look a different game."

Scoreboard

(First day: South Africa won toss)	
ENGLAND - First innings	
M A Atherton c Donald b Pollock	78 (358 min, 280 balls, 10 fours)
A J Stewart c Matthews b Schultz	6 (35 min, 22 balls, 1 four)
M R Ramprakash c Richardson b Donald	9 (31 min, 19 balls)
G P Thorpe c Richardson b Pollock	13 (48 min, 29 balls, 2 fours)
A Hick not out	105 (234 min, 175 balls, 22 fours)
R A Smith not out	1 (12 min, 5 balls)
Extras (b6, w1, nb3)	9
Total (for 4, 382 min, 84.3 overs)	221
Fall: 1-34 (Stewart), 2-36 (Ramprakash), 3-64 (Thorpe), 4-208 (Atherton).	
To bat: 1R C Russell, D G Cook, D Gough, R K Illingworth, A R C Fraser.	
Bowling: Donald 20-8-28-1 (w1) (5-2-4-0 3-1-4-1, 5-2-8-0, 5-3-10-0, 2-0-13-0); Schultz 12-4-45-1 (6-2-16-1, 3-10-4-0).	
4-2-15-0; Matthews 17-6-44-0 (5-1-16-0, 6-1-12-0, 6-4-16-0); Pollock 13-3-4-0 (2-0-12-0, 3-1-10-0, 2-3-1-0-0); Richardson 11-6-25-0 (w1) (5-2-8-0, 5-2-0-0); Craig 8-5-34-0 (4-3-2-0, 4-2-12-0); Warburton 2-3-1-0 (one spell).	
Progress: 90 min, 22.3 overs, Lunch: 64-3 (Atherton 34) 27.1 overs, 100; 190 min, 44.2 overs, Tea: 133 for 3 (Atherton 58, Hick 41) 57 overs, 120; 256 min, 61.2 overs, New ball taken after 90 overs at 188 for 3, 300 in 334 min, 81.1 overs. Bad light stopped play at 5.25pm.	
Atherton 60; 197 min, 163 balls, 6 fours.	
Hick 50; 130 min, 95 balls, 8 fours.	
Hick 100; 227 min, 169 balls, 20 fours.	
SOUTH AFRICA: A C Hudson, G Watson, W J Craig, D J Ganga, J W Rennie, B M Ndlovu, 10 J Richardson, C R Matthews, S M Pollock, B N Schultz, A A Donald.	
Umpires: C J Mitchell and S Venkatarathnam.	
TV Relay Umpire: D L Orchard.	
Match Referee: C H Lloyd.	

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- 1 Fellow in wrecked car is scornful (8)
 - 5 Cut article on southern Cyprus (6)
 - 9 Sheets showing configuration of Nile bend (3, 5)
 - 10 Standards old character associates with Indian Civil Service (6)
 - 11 Sphere's actual mass (5)
 - 12 Look, mate, resistance is useless - I'm a skilled worker (9)
 - 14 Believe story offered by retailer to valued customer? (6, 7)
 - 17 Derive calculus increment that's definite, after reworking (4)
 - 20 Minor burn? (9)
 - 21 Object to night in Paris being finally cancelled - it's a bore (5)
 - 22 French, I appreciate, on reflection, will be unresponsive (6)
 - 23 Pull a fast one, introducing an improvisatory composition (8)
 - 24 Persuaded to include information in story (6)
- DOWN**
- 1 Journalist given pamphlet to take away (8)
 - 2 Troops having time to receive one broadcast (7)
 - 3 A certain element's starting off in disgrace (5)
 - 4 Dance in which you don't move at all? It's a bell! (7, 4)
 - 5 Puma foreign aristocrat traps in America (9)
 - 6 Broke, stupid, when on outskirts of encampment (7)
 - 7 Guarantee clubs will be freed from blame (6)
 - 8 Arrange to give talk about Queen on the box (11)
 - 13 Economic problem assumes increased dimension (9)
 - 15 Sensitive meeting involving artist and Conservative (8)
 - 16 Popular hero, brave, with large heart (7)
 - 17 Drunken seaman, one in a state of oblivion (7)
 - 18 Advantageous ruse. Fulham overlooked to some extent (6)
 - 19 Former pupil about to crack up (5)

Thursday's Solution

CELESTIA SACRUL
LOGARITHMICALLY
LIT UP KID
OCTET CROSSBELL
UMG SNT
SPAGHETTI GAGEY
CEOUA
ABHOR MEMORANDA
LI B EN
MANIFEST UPSET
SELTINA
MAGNETOELECTRIC
AUE NELEMI
NANETTE DRESSED

Football

PHIL SHAW

Officials of an Italian Serie B club, Ancona, met last night to decide whether to press assault charges against unspecified Birmingham City players following violent clashes after an Anglo-Italian Cup tie on Wednesday.

The "Battle of Ancona" left the local club's coach, Massimo Cacciatori, nursing a fractured cheekbone and an eye wound. Cacciatori, who was taken to hospital but did not require surgery, alleged that his injuries were inflicted by Liam Daish, the Birmingham defender, during a fracas in the dressing-room area after an ill-tempered match.

Reports from Italy suggested that police may seek the extradition of as many as four members of the Birmingham party. Under Italian law, criminal proceedings are automatic if an individual is certified unfit to work by a doctor for 20 days or more. Conviction for assault can carry

a prison sentence of up to three years, but if Cacciatori is given less than 20 days to recover, he can sue his alleged assailant(s) only through the civil courts.

A spokesman for Ancona maintained that Cacciatori had been "punched and butted" during an "outrageous" attack. He added: "What's happened has happened. We've referred the case to the Italian League, and we will make up our minds calmly over the next few days."

Meanwhile, the Football League confirmed that it is likely to set up a commission of inquiry into events during and after Birmingham's 2-1 win. The League expects to receive a report today from the referee, John Lloyd of Wrexham, who also needed hospital treatment on two fingers injured as he sought to break up fighting in the tunnel after the match.

The only British newspaper journalist present, Colin Tatum of Birmingham's *Evening Mail*, reported yesterday that he saw Cacciatori run on to the pitch to strike one Birmingham player,

Paul Tait, and seize another, Ricky Otto, round the throat. He also witnessed the substitute, Jae Martin, being poked in the eye by an Ancona player.

No arrests were made, and Daish denied striking Cacciatori. "If that's what they want to say, let them. Nothing happened," Daish said. Television pictures showed the coach being wheeled away on a stretcher, evidently with face wounds.

Barry Fry, the Birmingham manager, initially branded his opposite number "a disgrace" for his alleged incursions on to the pitch, but by the time Birmingham's plane landed in Britain, the normally effusive Fry was tight-lipped. The club secretary, Alan Jones, issued a terse "no comment" yesterday.

The Anglo-Italian Cup has suffered from poor crowds and disciplinary problems since being resurrected in 1992. Only 800 spectators, including 92 Birmingham fans, were at Wednesday's match. Ironically, the clubs could well meet again in the final at Wembley next spring.

Leeds finally get their man

Tommy Brolin's transfer from Parma to Leeds should finally go through today for £4.5m, a record for the Yorkshire club. The fee - £600,000 of which Leeds will pay immediately and the rest over two and a half years - will also be a Swedish record.

Brolin, who played for Sweden in Stockholm on Wednesday, was due in Leeds last night and could make his debut at home to Chelsea tomorrow.

Parma had announced that the move was off because the 25-year-old Brolin had failed to agree personal terms. However, Bill Fotherby, Leeds' managing director, said: "Parma have been back to me to say the deal is on. I have been confident

all along that the transfer would go through."

Brolin, who will play as an attacking midfielder for Leeds, has played only three games for Parma this season and his career has been in the doldrums since he broke a foot a year ago.

Sheffield United have been barred by the Football League from making any signings until they repay £50,000 borrowed from the Professional Footballers' Association to pay the team's wages last week. The League's action prevented the Leeds United winger David White from joining on loan yesterday.

David Webb, the Brentford manager, has called in the police after being drawn into the

transfer "bungs" row. Webb was last week alleged to have accepted a £20,000 payment from Terry Venables when he was Southend United's manager and Venables was at Tottenham.

The claim was made in court by Jeffrey Fugler, who is suing Venables for £20,000 which he says is owed to him for a marketing deal.

Webb now believes there is a dirty tricks campaign being waged against him, including phone taps. "I am appalled at the campaign against Terry Venables and the use of innocent bystanders like me to destabilise his position," he said. "I'm fed up and will be reporting the matter to the police and the football authorities."

Cardinal's Intestine was one name suggested but Bishops Finger sounded so much more mouthwatering.



THE SERIOUS BEER WITH THE SILLY NAME.